Ioan Kingsford del.

THE GLOBE

After the map made by

MARTIN BEHAIM

of Nuremberg

1492

THE NAVAL SIDE OF BRITISH HISTORY

J. A. Callanan
Mark Cross '46

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE LIFE OF NELSON
THE STORY OF H.M.S. VICTORY
NELSON'S FLAGSHIP
LIFE OF ADMIRAL SIR JOHN LEAKE
SOUTHEY'S NELSON
SEA KINGS OF BRITAIN
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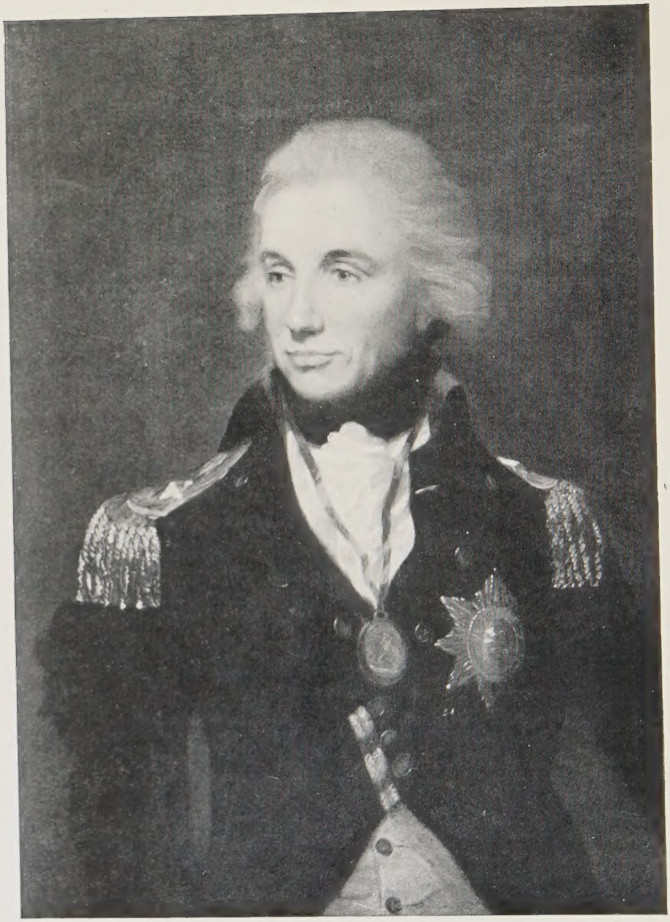

NELSON

From the picture by Lemuel F. Abbot in the National Portrait Gallery, London

THE NAVAL SIDE OF BRITISH HISTORY

BY

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PREFACE

NAVAL History has for long been regarded as the special preserve of naval officers and naval experts. Certain phases of the subject; for example, naval construction, naval armament, naval administration, and naval tactics, must for technical reasons continue a sealed book to the majority. But in its broader aspects, Naval History is fairly easy to understand; and demonstrating, as it does, the finest and most characteristic achievements of the race, should be instant and widespread in its appeal.

The history text-books have not indeed neglected it. Even the smallest primers offer their tribute to what the fleet has done. But the tribute, too frequently, is of the wrong sort. It is like the ritual in some impressive ceremony, which adorns, while it veils, the underlying mysteries. The game of bowls on Plymouth Hoe; the last words of Sir Richard Grenville; Blake's whip at the masthead; the loss of the *Royal George*; the death of Nelson in the cockpit of the *Victory*; these are not forgotten in the chronicles, and they deserve enshrinement, because they stimulate the imagination like the gentle undercurrent of haunting music which throbs through the tenser passages of a great drama. But taken by themselves they cannot be said to put us into touch with the realities of naval war; the compulsion exercised by fleets on cabinets and by cabinets on fleets; the vulnerability of seaborne commerce; the dependence of an oceanic empire on

ships, and the dependence of ships on an adequate base ; the cause and effects of battle at sea ; and the strangle grip of blockade. These things have played so vast a part in British history that to ignore them is to set up a false perspective, against which plain facts and upright figures appear no better than distorted images.

As a nation we pride ourselves upon our sense of fair play and our innate love of justice. But these great virtues do not shine forth in the treatment we have accorded to the Navy and its rulers. Without sufficient knowledge of the matter under dispute, no critics, however wise, are competent to pass judgment, and far too many of our sea-verdicts have been reversed in posterity's court of appeal. Drake was ostracized in the year after he destroyed the Armada ; Rooke a few months after he had taken Gibraltar. Raleigh was beheaded for advocating the claims of sea-power ; and Byng was shot to expiate the national unpreparedness for naval war. Torrington was dismissed the service after his own plans had been ruined by a council of statesmen ashore ; and Vernon because he insisted on bringing to light the grievances of the lower deck. Hawke was burnt in effigy at the moment he was winning the great victory of Quiberon ; and Rodney was recalled home with ignominy in the hour of his greatest triumph. Few of our greatest Admirals have escaped contemporary censure.

The Navy has not been injured by ingratitude. Far from it. Our want of approbation has made the modesty of the sailor proverbial. No : the resulting injury is national. When we take for granted the fleet's ministrations we are apt as a people to grow smug-faced and self-satisfied, emphasizing the " chosen " quality of our breed, the " election " of our race.

Such an attitude, deplorable on all grounds, is attended by deadly peril to ourselves—the peril that we may come to overlook the need for the shield of our earthly realm's salvation.

No epoch could better illustrate this than the period of twenty years between 1919 and 1939. During this period three contributing factors ministered to the hereditary British tendency to forget in an era of so-called peace the part played at all times by command of the sea.

If the outbreak of war in 1914 found the Air Force in its infancy, the year 1919 found it recognized as a giant of steadily increasing potentialities. Its advocates, advancing for it the most inflated claims, and heralding it as the arbiter of future wars, did not hesitate to proclaim all warships obsolete and therefore an unjustifiable expense. In their confident calculations these prophets overlooked the dependence of this country on sea-borne supplies, and the dependence of the merchantmen, bringing home the supplies, on the protection of the fighting fleet.

The second factor was the Washington Conference of 1922. This assembled to deal with the new situation in the Pacific arising from the collapse in 1911 of the central government in China and the predatory acquisitiveness which China's helplessness had occasioned in Japan. The distance of the Western Powers from the Orient made the conference pre-eminently naval in character. The proposal to abolish submarines failed owing to unashamed expressions of belief that it was the most efficacious anti-British instrument of war; while the restriction of British capital ships to an equality with those of the United States could only have been condoned if proof had been forthcoming that Britain had no commitments outside the Pacific.

The third factor was the League of Nations, the most ambitious product of the Treaty of Versailles. Its apologists proclaimed it not (for what it was) the paviour of a possible path to Peace, but the saviour of a war-weary world. The British accepted the delusive dogma that "Collective Security" rendered obsolete that conscious nationalism on which in

previous ages the vital need for British battleships had been based.

The first serious reconsideration of these views was occasioned by the Chinese appeal to Geneva for assistance against Japan. The resulting failure of the League as an instrument of pacification synchronized with the expiry of the time-limit imposed on armaments at Washington ten years previously. It was inevitable therefore that 1932 should witness a second Conference of a similar kind : it was equally inevitable that the Conference should fail. Britain exerted herself patiently to persuade other states to follow her own example. For since 1919 she had persistently pursued a policy of unilateral disarmament, which can now be seen to have been positively provocative. In 1914 she had 89 capital ships : in 1932 she had 15. In 1914 she had 131 cruisers to guard her world-wide trade-routes : in 1932 she had 59. The new Disarmament Conference, opening in 1932, achieved nothing and was adjourned until 1933. And in January 1933 Hitler became Chancellor ; and the swastika was unfurled as the symbol of broken treaties, unabashed militarism and wanton aggression. The tocsin of international alarm clanged with a menacing sound : and in 1939 Great Britain once more found herself depending for her very existence on her heroic merchant- and fishing-fleets and the vigilant, ubiquitous men-of-war, their escort, their safeguard and shield.

While the struggle still rages, it seems premature to treat in detail of the past twenty years. It is hoped to add supplementary chapters to this book when the star of Peace returns. Meanwhile it is well to recall that pregnant saying attributed to Themistocles, " He who commands the sea commands the situation."

ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE, GREENWICH,
April, 1940.

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CHAPTER I

NEW MAPS FOR OLD

PATRIOTIC poets, if taken literally, are rather apt to antedate the origins of British sea-power. Our national maritime anthem, for example, leads us to believe that Britannia, by Heaven's command, has ruled the waves ever since our island home arose from out the azure main. Another oft-quoted ballad, almost as well known, reminds us that the flag of those who guard our native shores has braved the battle and the breeze for a thousand years. These are pardonable exaggerations. What is the truth?

We must seek the beginnings of our naval history in the fifteenth century, at the beginning of what we are accustomed to speak of as "Modern Times." The sea, ships, and sailors entered into the story of Great Britain ages earlier; but it was not until the fifteenth century that even the wisest of our ancestors began to realize that the land they loved had a special destiny upon the ocean-waves.

Prior to the fifteenth century the ideas of men concerning the shape of our planet, and the distribution of land and water upon it, differed so widely from what we believe to-day that, if we are to understand our own history, it is necessary to put aside our present-day knowledge and attempt to understand what the best informed men were teaching in the days when learning was confined to the monasteries.

Happily there is preserved in Hereford Cathedral a thirteenth-century map which gives a real insight into mediæval geography. The world here is shown to be round,

and in the very centre of the land-mass stands Jerusalem, the seat of man's redemption. A little study—for the map is difficult at first to understand—shows that Jerusalem is the meeting-place of what Shakespeare in after days called "the three corners of the world"; that is to say, the three continents—Europe the region of light, Africa the region of darkness, and Asia the region of mystery. A great gulf, the Mediterranean, separates Europe from Africa; and two smaller inlets, the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, separate Africa from Asia. Round the whole triune land-mass rolls the "Ocean." This at first glance seems to have no more breadth than a very large river; but that is only because the frame of the map suggests an outer circumference. The mediæval mind did not find it possible to think of an "outer circumference" to Ocean, any more than we find it possible to think of an outer circumference to Space. Ocean was the boundary of man's earthly existence; formless, unfixed, inhospitable and limitless.

In this conception of the universe the British Isles appeared as the last foothold of habitable land in the European corner of the world. Nothing, then, could be more natural than that the inhabitants of Britain should turn towards the continent and away from the Atlantic—away from storms and mists and angry breakers towards the vineyards of France, the orange groves of Spain, and all the shimmering loveliness of Italy.

The mediæval mind felt a passion of curiosity with regard to the continent of Asia, and a superb indifference with regard to the continent of Africa. This too is not difficult to understand. Out of the east had come the blessings of Christianity; out of the east had come the menace of Islam; and, beyond the battlefields where Cross and Crescent met, lay markets packed with strange merchandise and trade-routes whence came stories of fabulous wealth and wonder-working kings. Travellers penetrating the Orient might keep the same latitude and find at each stage fresh stimulus to proceed; but Africa, with its belts of impassable desert, its scorching sun, wild beasts and wilder

savages, repelled the European pioneer, who left all but its northern littoral unvisited.

It was the lure of Asia that drew men in the fifteenth century to explore the fringes of the world. If it had not been for the undying antagonism of the Moslem and his unyielding grip of the near east, they might have found their way to India overland and approached it as in ancient time Alexander the Great had done. But the Crusades had ended disastrously; the power of Islam continued to increase; and the armies of the Ottoman Turk straddled the Levant. If the far east was to be reached, and its wealth brought home, the journey must be undertaken, not by land but by sea.

This decision was first reached by the royal house of Portugal. The route to be followed was to be Oceanic; but not trans-Oceanic. The Portuguese ships, keeping in sight of land all the way, were to pass from the mouth of the Mediterranean to the mouth of the Persian Gulf by a circumnavigation of Africa. If the mediæval mind had not been so contemptuous of the Dark Continent, the Portuguese might have lingered by the way and discovered valuable trade openings nearer home. But they pressed ever onwards to the farthest east; and, after seventy years of oceanic enterprise and most conscientious map-making,[1] they turned the "heel of Africa," and in confident trust that the goal they longed for would eventually be won, christened it the Cape of Good Hope. The year was 1488.

The enterprise, the hardihood, and the persistence of the Portuguese, for which the modern world can never be too grateful, could not fail to attract the attention of all thinking men, especially those versed in mathematics and astronomy, who were already questioning the accepted tenets of science. As the fifteenth century neared its close, the fashionable

[1] For accuracy and workmanship the Portuguese charts were not really so remarkable as those made by Mediterranean navigators one hundred and fifty years earlier. There may still be found in the Vatican and elsewhere, mediæval sea-maps, called *Portolani*, which date from the beginning of the fourteenth century, and prove that in this branch of science, as in so many others, the Italians were the true pioneers.

view held by learned men about the shape and dimensions of the earth began to take definite shape, and in 1492—a memorable date in the annals of the sea—Martin Behaim completed his famous figure of the world which happily is still preserved at Nürnberg, his native city.

When Behaim's work is compared with the monkish composition still preserved at Hereford, the points of difference seem more remarkable and numerous than the points of resemblance. But this is not really the case. Behaim incorporates masses of detail, unknown in the thirteenth century; but he mounts his new material on the ancient framework of three continents only. Europe, Africa, and Asia still remain the three corners of the world; and this fundamental idea is not altered by the fact that the Persian Gulf and Red Sea are now shown to be no more than tributary arms of the widespread Indian Ocean. It is the details, with their wealth of imagery and colour, which attract us in Behaim's map; the kings on their thrones, the blazonry of the flags, the ships under sail, the spouting whales, and the isles of mystery. But the observer must turn resolutely aside from these, and concentrate upon the one outstanding feature which makes Behaim's cosmography an historic event of the first importance.

The painters of the Hereford map depicted the world on a flat panel; Behaim painted his map upon a Globe. He believed, as the English monks had believed, that the continents numbered no more than three, but he projected these three on a revolving sphere.

Behaim and those who thought with him were doubtless ahead of their own generation. It did not follow that the great multitude of mankind would accept such teaching. But in the very year in which the first modern globe was completed, the great truth it taught received confirmation of a kind intelligible to all men.

Christopher Columbus in August, 1492, set out upon his first memorable voyage.

It is difficult at this distance of time and from the evidence available to say with certainty what motives were uppermost

in his mind. Nothing was more rational than that after ages should have invested him with all the knowledge which the most profound thinkers of his age possessed: nothing was more natural than that a genius so original should have lacked in his lifetime the appreciation he deserved. When he first reached Portugal, the explorers of that country had not yet turned the heel of Africa. He might, therefore, have joined in the quest for the Indies along the lines which Portugal had ordained. He refused to do so; and quarrelled with the people among whom he had come to live. He had his own ideas, to which he clung with obstinate pertinacity. He would steer, not for the Cape of Good Hope, but for the setting sun. There is no sailor to-day who does not acclaim his exemplary skill as a master mariner. Navigational instruments were still in their infancy; and yet he could trust himself with compass and astrolabe[1] to steer a ship across the uncharted seas on a line as straight as the crow flies.

With such a faculty he undertook to drive a furrow through the desert of waters, which all preceding centuries since the fall of Rome had believed to be limitless; and promised in a few weeks to set foot on the Fortunate Isles which the Portuguese without success had sought for seventy years.

The incredulity of his own generation is the true measure of Columbus's greatness. Finding in the Queen of Castile the patron whom he desired, he made good his own most arrogant claims, crossed the western Ocean; and in a matter of months returned, bearing with him the tangible fruits of the garden of the Hesperides and native "Indians" of strange complexion.

Behaim's globe in consequence could no longer be regarded as conjectural. Its truth must, indeed, have seemed to the scientists of that day established beyond all possibility of dispute. The world, in short, was henceforth regarded as spherical in shape, with its land-masses spreading from a

[1] An instrument for taking the altitude or height of celestial bodies; the forerunner of the quadrant, backstaff, and sextant.

common centre into three more or less symmetrical but disconnected continents—Europe, severed from Africa by the Mediterranean, which already began to shrink in man's esteem from the "Great Sea" which it had once been called; Africa, divided from Asia by the Indian Ocean with its numberless islands, floating and stationary; and Asia, separated from Europe by the Atlantic which Columbus had crossed.

By this big revolution in the thoughts of men no realm in all the wide world was more affected than England. England whose white cliffs had for ages been the last human foothold in the barren west; England, whose sullen skies and wind-swept moorland stretches had for ages been accepted as the natural threshold of chaos and the outer void; England was now no longer on the rim of the world, now no longer on the furthest confines of civilization, but excellently placed for those who would voyage to the Orient with all its wealth and all its unnumbered marvels. Over against the British Isles, as Egypt stood to Greece, lay India with all its gems and jewels, and the mysterious regions of Cipangu and Cathay.

Englishmen, standing on their western shores, gazed on the Atlantic with a new curiosity. Could it be that India would one day be ruled by them? Could it be that over the Atlantic surges lay continents which might one day be peopled with folk of British birth? The spirit of sea ancestry stirred strongly in them; the restlessness of the Renaissance made music in their brains; and they began to dream of voyages along coasts till now unvisited and perilous adventures in faëry lands under nodding palms and unfamiliar stars.

CHAPTER II

THE GENESIS OF BRITISH SEA-POWER

IT is difficult to believe that the discoveries of Columbus could, under any circumstances, have failed to deflect the course of British history. But the hour was indeed propitious; for in the person of Henry VII., who had won the English crown only a few years before Columbus set sail, this country possessed for the first time a monarch who deliberately proposed to build upon the foundations of naval power.

Such a statement implies two postulates: firstly, that England possesses natural foundations of naval power; and secondly, that it is possible to build upon them.

What then are the foundations?

In the first place the British Isles form part and parcel of the continent of Europe, and yet enjoy all the advantages of complete detachment. They are like the Olympian Gods in Homer's *Iliad*. They behold the drama; and, if they choose, can do so at a distance. They can also participate and on whichever side they please; but cannot themselves be invaded by the most tremendous exponents of mere military strength. Geologists tell us that the chalk hills of Picardy and the chalk hills of Kent were once portions of the same range; and upon maps of similar scale a child could trace where the cleavage occurred. But the cleavage is there, and the largest ships afloat can pass without hindrance where once the nibbling sheep kept the grass short. It is difficult even now simultaneously to visualize both aspects of this union in partition.

The British Isles at times seem so detached and independent that even wise men begin to enquire why British folk should concern themselves with continental politics. They forget that the Rhine which has begotten the German people, and that the Seine which has begotten the French people, both drain into the narrow English seas; that the front door of Central Europe and the front door of Western Europe alike open into England's vestibule. It is as impossible for England to ignore Europe as for the hand to ignore an injury to the breast or head: so impossible, that in moments of shock to the system, as in 1805 or 1915, we are apt to forget the narrow seas altogether and to line our coasts with unnecessary soldiers to check the advance of infantry and horse.

To put it very shortly: the British Isles, as members of the body politic, must take their share in a corporate existence, or else perish like a withered limb. And if they take their share, then they must have ships.

And as in a natural body it is found that the various parts function unconsciously while the body is in health; so it will be found, when Europe is peaceful and happy, that England is producing a multitude of ships and mariners to man them.

She is in a peculiar way well fitted to do so. Her coasts are so carved and fretted and broken, into bays and fiords and gulfs and estuaries, that in all her not inconsiderable area there is no place more distant from the sea than a short seventy miles. Why it happens that an indented coast-line should produce sailors in abundance is a difficult problem to solve. But what is true of England is true also of Norway; and the best seamen of France have always been supplied by Brittany. A homely parable will perhaps help to explain what is not immediately obvious. Have you ever noticed, when you have been walking through some busy town, how all the most inviting shops seem to be placed on the opposite side of the road? Cross the street; and the most attractively dressed windows do the same. Distance, in fact, lends enchantment to the view. So it is with men who live upon narrow waters. The opposite side of their fiord or estuary lures them by the promise of something which they do not themselves possess.

They make a vessel of some sort; it matters not what; a coracle, a shallop, or even a tub. They cross, and re-cross; become ferrymen, and carriers. Ambition grows and they change into merchants and shipbuilders. Centuries pass. The ferryman has become a pilot for uncharted seas: his shallop has become a transatlantic liner. All happens quite naturally. Man develops in conformity with his environment. In Lapland, for centuries past reckoning, the natives have harnessed their runner sledges to the reindeer; and, wrapping themselves in garments of fur, have travelled over the frozen snow. In the British Isles, as far back as Julius Cæsar's time, the natives were notorious for the ships they built and their hardihood in sailing them.

There is wealth to be had in plenty from the conveyance of merchandise. But the seas of Britain produce their own wealth in addition to what may be had by bartering with foreigners. The continent of Europe is prolonged under water beyond the rocky cliffs of Galway and Sligo. The British Isles rest upon a continental shelf, and the narrow British seas are but expansive valleys flooded with salt water. Within these shallow ocean fields the finny tribes resort, in millions, and hundreds of thousands of millions. Visit the markets at Grimsby or Aberdeen; and, if you are from further inland, you will think that the sea has been emptied of fish. And yet you will have seen but part of a day's catch in but one of a hundred fishing-towns.

These then—to mention no others—are the natural foundations of Britain's sea-power. What other nation since the world began has produced more ships or more sailors, or been endowed with such training grounds for maritime enterprise or drawn more wealth from the harvest of the sea?

Such thoughts, however, are modern thoughts rather than mediæval. The greatest English rulers of the Middle Age did not think of their realm as maritime; or calculate their strength in terms of what the sea had given them. To Henry II., who otherwise would have marched his troops from the Tweed to the Pyrenees, the English Channel was a tedious gulf, a queasy obstacle. Edward I., immersed in

affairs which seemed to him of incomparably greater importance, delegated his responsibility for sea affairs to a maritime deputy or viceroy. Edward III., who arrogated to himself the grandiloquent title of "King of the Sea," so grossly abused his prerogative of requisitioning ships, that the mercantile marine was sapped of its strength and threatened to perish from inanition.

At intervals the voice of the Prophet was heard; and occasionally the wisdom of the Prophet was proclaimed by the mouth of a king. Alfred the Great, the truth-teller, is sometimes called the "Founder of the Navy." It would be more correct to call him the "Navy's First Advocate." For although England possesses the foundations of sea-power, the Navy is not the edifice to be built thereon, but the guardian of the edifice after it has been erected. This was the fundamental truth which Alfred tried to teach. "There is no advantage," he affirmed, "in living on an island, unless your navy rides in undisputed sway over the waters that surround it." Unhappily, this truth was spoken to a people slow to hear and quick to forget.

In a play, written after the long experience of the Spanish wars, Shakespeare puts the following words into the mouth of a councillor of Cymbeline, King of Britain:

> Remember, sir, my liege,
> The kings your ancestors! together with
> The natural bravery of your isle, which stands
> As Neptune's park, ribbed and paled in
> With rocks unscaleable and roaring waters,
> With sands that will not bear your enemies' boats,
> But suck them up to the topmast.

If Shakespeare with his keen insight and deep penetration could deceive himself with such nonsense, it is not surprising if ordinary men should fall into error as pitiful. In respect of natural barriers the British Isles are built the wrong way round. The "rocks unscaleable," which Spain possesses in the Pyrenees and Italy in the Alps, confronting and confounding the invader, in Great Britain are found piled along her western front where in old days no invaders were to be expected. On the east and south where the realm of England comes nearest to

the continent, the shore, instead of beating back " the envious siege of watery Neptune," suffers grievously in many places from erosion; and sloping gradually downwards from the western heights offers along the whole sweep of the Channel and North Sea coasts vantage point after vantage point, where an enemy could land; harbour after harbour where ships can enter and lie snug in a roaring gale. The seas of Britain, so far from being a " fence impregnable," are an open highroad whither vessels may come from all the seven seas. It is as easy to carry men in ships as to carry merchandise—provided that there is no opposition. And for that reason the British Isles are more easily invaded than any other state in Europe. Consider what this has meant to us in the past. Phœnicians, Romans, Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes and Normans: Julius Cæsar, Aulus Plautius, Julius Agricola, Hengist, Horsa, Cnut, Hardrada, William I., Henry of Anjou, Bolingbroke, Warwick the Kingmaker, Edward IV. Here are some of our invaders and conquerors, and the list might easily be increased.

Another prophet, who spoke with no uncertain voice and deserves to rank beside Alfred, is the nameless author of the *Libelle of English Policy*. This " little book " was written about the middle of the fifteenth century, many years, that is to say, before Behaim and Columbus had taught the world to think of land beyond the Atlantic. In his day there was no sea-borne trade conducted by Europeans outside the confines of Europe. Within the confines of Europe there were two main water zones: the Mediterranean and its confluents; the Baltic and its approaches. The products of the northern seas and the products of the southern seas were dissimilar and therefore invited exchange. The two systems were bent, like the two globes of an hour-glass, into the figure of eight, and the narrow orifice, through which alone connection could be made, was the constricted throat which we call the Strait of Dover.

> And chiefly keep the sharp narrow sea
> Between Dover and Calais, and as thus
> That foes pass none without good will of us.

Thus wrote the advocate of a policy, the wisdom of which

should have needed no demonstration. "Foes" may be interpreted here in the widest sense, as meaning those who would undermine British trade just as much as those who would land with armed men. "You hold the hub of the commercial universe. Make it your own!" That was the message. Did the rulers of England profit by it?

At the conclusion of the Wars of the Roses the control of the northern seas of Europe lay in the tight-fisted grip of the Hanseatic League; the control of the southern seas of Europe was still exercised in the main by the great maritime republic of Venice. England had no part or lot in either system, and the vital significance of the Dover Strait went unrecognized. There was a considerable demand throughout the land for commodities which Britons themselves could not manufacture. But the central Government, blind to the true interests of the realm, continued to accept subsidies from the Hanseatic League in return for what was virtually a monopolistic license to carry British imports and exports. The natives of these islands conducted their own coastwise traffic, but never dreamed of competing with the merchants of Venice or the purse-proud princes of the Hansa.

On 1st August, 1485, the Earl of Richmond, sailing with two thousand men from the mouth of the Seine, invaded the realm of England with the same comfortable ease experienced by many predatory precursors. Three weeks later he won the battle of Bosworth, and with it the royal crown. It was a tremendous moment in the history of our race; for here for the first time was a ruler who fully recognized the possibilities of British sea-power, and intended to use them to the national advantage and to the welfare and safety of his House.

It is impossible in short space to do anything like justice to his far-reaching maritime policy. One or two points only can be selected from a long programme of salutary changes.

England in 1485 was still a pastoral country. The main source of the national wealth was derived, not from shipping or from textiles, but from sheep-farms; from the growing of wool. The principal markets for this product were the rich city-states of the Low Country at the mouth of the Rhine. These,

A CARRACK OF c. 1450

After the Flemish engraver known as W. A. (See p. 36

On loan at the Science Museum, South Kensington

(*By permission of R. Morton Nance, Esq.*)

it must be understood, were dependent on England for their raw material. And yet instead of flinging open their gates in welcome to the bales, they levied a heavy import duty on them, or, in other words, charged the English a big price for bringing them what they wanted.

Henry VII. was not long in making up his mind what to do. He first forbade the export of raw wool from England altogether. He then established at Calais, the only English foothold on the Continent, a great market for all who required this essential commodity. If the rich cities of the Netherlands were to continue the world's greatest producers of woven fabrics they would either have to journey to Calais and carry home their purchases, or else come to terms with the "Huckstering King," who asked for nothing better than that his people should be like-minded with himself and become a "nation of shopkeepers."

Naturally enough the Netherlanders preferred to come to terms, and Henry negotiated with them a Commercial Treaty which by itself would make his reign famous even if there were nought of profit beside.

Having proved himself a tower of strength to the merchants, Henry next turned to the shippers. The first necessity, he saw, was oversea trade; and in his more ambitious, or pugnacious, moods, he must have cast angry glances at the Steelyard, the headquarters of the Hanseatic League in London, which stood where Cannon Street Station now stands; and which, like a monstrous parasite, drew to itself the nourishment on which Englishmen might have thriven. But until the sea-power of England was more firmly based, the Hansa was too mighty an organization with which to compete. Henry saw that there was an obvious advantage in small beginnings; and he confined himself to what, in modern English, we should call one particular "line" of ships. By his "Navigation Act," the first of its kind, he prohibited the importation into England of Bordeaux wine in any vessels but those owned by his own lieges. There was much trade in those days between this country and Bordeaux which had once been an English possession. Wine was the principal

commodity hailing thence; and the wine was carried in monstrous barrels called Tuns. After Henry's Navigation Act, English ships were measured by Tonnage capacity; that is to say, by the number of barrels of Bordeaux wine which they could stow in their holds.

The biggest British craft were still much too small to satisfy Henry's requirements. He therefore set himself to build vessels which should serve as models for the shipbuilding industry. These ships were built at his own expense, from his own specifications, and to meet his own requirements. The four best of them were called the *Sweepstake*, the *Mary Fortune*, the *Sovereign*, and the *Regent*. The *Sweepstake* and *Mary Fortune* were fine, beautiful ships which would have set any true Briton's heart aflame. But they were utterly eclipsed by the *Sovereign*; and the *Sovereign*, probably the finest vessel of her kind till then ever built, was in her turn surpassed by the *Regent*. The *Regent* was so large that she could not be induced to enter the king's chief harbour, which had none the less satisfied all former English dynasties. She was so lofty-sided and so immense that it was impossible to think of trying to repair and refit her in the fashion which had done duty since the days of Noah. In short, she brought in her lordly wake more than one big problem: and as the problems came before him, Henry scrutinized them carefully and in due course provided a solution. He closed the royal dockyard near Southampton, which had satisfied even the exacting victor of Agincourt, and selected in its place the harbour of Portsmouth, which has served the Royal Navy ever since. Here, in order that the *Regent* might be tended in a manner worthy of such a master-piece, he constructed, for the imitation of all posterity, the earliest recorded Dry Dock.

What was at the back of his mind when he constructed these wonderful vessels? For it must be clearly understood that they were not intended for war. They were armed as strongly as possible, so that they might be able to take care of themselves. But they were not what to-day we call battleships. On the contrary, they were merchantmen; designed as merchantmen, equipped as merchantmen, and employed as merchantmen.

Employed as merchantmen! It was a new thing for the King of England to "turn an honest penny"; the sort of thing which some of the French nobility would not have been able to understand even in 1789. Henry was quite interested in coins even for their own sake. He invented the silver shilling and the golden sovereign. He is said to have left behind when he died £2,000,000 in solid cash. But he was not the mere miser that some people have painted him. He was endeavouring to set a royal example which the people of England could follow: to be industrious, to be thrifty, and above all to look onwards to the day "when their ship should come home!"

He was quite prepared to send the *Mary Fortune* on a commercial pilgrimage in search of good-luck. He was quite prepared to put down a small sum, if the *Sweepstake* brought him a bigger. He was quite prepared to employ the *Sovereign* and the *Regent* upon trading ventures in his own royal name. But this, after all, was but a small part of his intent. What he best liked was to hire or charter his ships to private firms: to the Cannings of Bristol, or to other merchants as worthy. He charged a good price, but not an excessive one; and he put the gold pieces into his iron-shod coffers. But that again was not his main object. His sound commonsense told him that, if any English traders ever saw and used his ships, they would never be contented with inferior craft. He knew that he could trust them to love the tall ships, and to copy and to imitate them.

Nor were these four beautiful ships the only incentive he employed. He used the national wealth to subsidize the shipping industry. And these grants in aid were no niggardly loosenings of the royal purse-strings. Henry was imperially superb in his universal largess. He decided first what size of ship was most desirable, and then offered a lump sum of money—and a generous one—for every ton of shipping above the mark.

The sea-instinct of the race had been there all along. At last it received the appropriate encouragement. The warehouses filled to overflowing with goods for export. Every

month saw the number of ships increase. And whatever demand was made for seafaring men, the supply was always forthcoming.

But the seamen of England in 1485 were men of narrow vision, with eyes that turned naturally to coastwise traffic and continental exchanges. Henry saw further than any of his forebears. He would like to have been the patron of Columbus. Always a lover of books and manuscripts, he lost his heart to the new maps which were a feature of the age. He knew all that Behaim was intent on teaching. He realized that England was no longer the last human foothold on the world's rim. He realized that across the western ocean lay the mighty continents and mysterious isles of Cipangu and Cathay. He prayed that the people whom he had been called to govern might lift their eyes from the blood-soaked battlefields of France, might live in happy peacefulness with their neighbours, might turn their backs on the continent, and point their prows for the setting sun and the fortunate isles of the blest.

His first expedition weighed from Bristol in 1497. Its "Navigator" Giovanni Cabota (whom to-day we know as John Cabot), was like Columbus a man of Italian birth; for Englishmen, with their coastwise ideas, had still to learn the art of the astrolabe and how to correct their altitudes by Johan Müller's tables of the sun's declination. But they were apt pupils, we may well believe, and made up in seamanship what they lacked in nautical science.

Henry was pleased and satisfied with the results of the first voyage; and, though the details are now very elusive and obscure, it seems practically certain that from this time onwards hardly a year passed without the equipment and dispatch of some similar enterprise. The end in view was always Eastern Asia, with its glittering domes and its many coloured merchandise. The harvest, therefore, proved disappointing to all engaged in the quest; for the "new-found-land" was forbidding and inhospitable. But if men's knowledge of geography was hopelessly at fault, we must not on that account lose the meaning of these voyages or miss their true significance.

The Island Race was an Island Race no more. They had learned to cross the Atlantic in a northerly latitude. They had discovered the cod on the banks of the " new-found-land "; and the cod was in itself remunerative enough to draw them across the Atlantic in voyages of uninterrupted continuity. The Portuguese and Spaniards might sail over lazy turquoise seas to realms of pearl and gold. But in the tempests of the North Atlantic the British seamen were bred, and their vessels tried.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST BRITISH BATTLESHIPS

THERE are two principles in maritime affairs with which to-day everyone is familiar: firstly, that all ships belong to one of two classes, the Royal Navy and the Merchant Service; and secondly, that it is the duty of the first service to protect the second. We must put both these principles aside if we are to understand the evolution of British sea-power. When Henry VII. came to the throne there was no thought in the mind of anyone that it was the duty of fighting ships to safeguard non-combatant craft; for the simple reason that all British ships belonged to the self-same category.

Armed to the teeth they certainly were, and yet, in spite of their weapons, they were merchantmen. No vessels were designed in England for battle purposes only.

This vital fact, which it is most important to understand, becomes all the more remarkable when we remember that other nations had already established the distinction which Britain still ignored—that is, between merchantmen and fighting ships.

The fighting ships of the Mediterranean were the direct descendants of the fighting ships of antiquity. They were very long in proportion to their breadth, they were of shallow draught, and were propelled by long sweeps or oars. Modern writers refer to them as galleys, and though this is not a very good word, it may serve our present purpose. The Romans at Actium in 31 B.C. referred to their typical battleship as a

trireme; and the selfsame term was employed by the Venetians fourteen hundred years later.

The Venetian galley, whether she was a bireme, a trireme, or a pentireme, was a big ship of beautiful lines, with a length more than six times the measure of her breadth. In the after part were the officers' quarters, very roomy and luxurious, with glass from Murano and carpets from Stamboul; and in the forward part was the vessel's armament mounted on a single or a double deck. The armament of course differed from age to age with the change of weapons. The bows and arrows gave place to the arquebuse; the arquebuse to the musket; and the musket to the cannon or heavy gun. But there was one instrument of warfare which remained constant through the ages and in which galley commanders reposed their deepest faith. Alike in the great days of Rome and in the great days of Venice all battle craft carried under their bows a beak or ram, a formidable extension of the vessel's fabric, built of wood but shod with steel.

Between the officers' quarters and the fighting decks stretched a narrow bridge or gangway, and on either side of it were arranged the rowing benches on which were seated the galley slaves. These bondmen, whose miserable existence has passed into a proverb, found their labour so overwhelmingly hot and so utterly exhausting that they were obliged to content themselves with the minimum of clothing, and to exclude from their diet everything that could generate heat. With ankles shackled together to prevent escape; with backs bare to the whips of their persecutors; with no nourishment but bread and water; and with no bed or pillow by night beyond the great oar which they had pulled by day, these toilers were of all men most miserable. Yet they were always in the most magnificent physical condition; and at the sound of the pipe they drove their vessel through the water, with its hideous ram ready to rip through opposing ships as a ploughshare seams up the fields.

Why Great Britain alone of all the mediaeval nations refused to countenance such craft, it is difficult to explain. French and Italian writers must surely be wrong in singling

out as chief cause the tempestuous nature of the British seas, because the Vikings of Norway used ships of galley build, and are believed therein to have made the passage to America. Again, it cannot have been ignorance, for the early invaders of Britain made use of long ships for the subjection of these islands. It would be consoling to the national pride if we could believe that the type was deliberately rejected by our forefathers because it entailed slavery, which they declined to countenance. Perhaps that was in part the cause. But we must not lose sight of the fact that people of English birth are practical folk, who like their vessels, whether they be domestic utensils or something bigger, always to be of practical utility. The twentieth century cry, "What use is the battleship?" may well have been raised ten centuries ago; for off the field of battle the galley was as difficult to justify as a modern submarine. Alfred built galleys in order to prevent the bloodthirsty Danes from landing upon his coasts; but here, as in other respects, Alfred stands alone, the exception proving the rule.

British-built vessels, then, from the time of Alfred onwards were constructed primarily as merchantmen, and were designed almost exclusively to carry cargo. They were very roomy and commodious, and by French critics have been called "Round Ships," because their extreme length was hardly more than twice the measure of their beam. They varied considerably in size, but hardly at all in rig. They had one mast only, at the head of which was a crow's nest for the lookout man; they had a single sail of ample proportions which could be reduced by means of reef-points. They had a bowsprit which helped them to set up their rigging. They had no particular skill in shaping their course if the wind was contrary, but then their employers were not in a hurry. Their chief officers were the "master," whose knowledge of navigation had been learnt in the hard school of experience, and the "boatswain," who specialized in seamanship, and gave the crew their orders.

The monotonous course of these men's lives was interrupted whenever their ship was needed for the service of the Crown

This only happened in time of war, but war in the Middle Ages was of frequent occurrence, and kings of England in time of war were helpless without ships. If a passage was to be made to Normandy or Guienne, if troops were to be landed for the siege of a French town or a raid into Picardy, then vessels were required to bridge the Channel. There was no demand for fighting ships, although battle at sea was not impossible, if fleets sailed simultaneously from France to England and met halfway across. What a monarch of mediaeval England required was not "battleships," as we understand the word, but what to-day we call "armed transports." The ships that plied from port to port as carriers, the ships that ploughed the North Sea for the harvest of herrings and haddock, the ships that boldly sailed to Iceland in pursuit of whale, were inspected by the king's officers and hired, if found suitable, for the transference of soldiers oversea.

Not unnaturally the soldiers, keeping well in view the possibility of meeting a foe in mid-channel, looked at the transports with a different eye from that which a sailor would turn on them. The vessels were clearly unsuited for battle, and battle was always in the soldier's mind. It was customary, therefore, when merchantmen were hired for the Crown, to convert them into temporary fortresses by the addition of "military works." At either end of the ship the royal carpenters erected a tower or turret-like structure, analogous to the cage-work which modern masons employ when they build a house. Fir poles were set up and lashed together with seizings of hempen rope. Cross bars gave additional support, and the ship's stout deck and stouter bulwarks gave an excellent foundation. On the top of the cage-work came a floor of three-inch plank, round which the builders constructed a crenellated breastwork for the convenience and protection of the fighting men. In time, perhaps, the scaffolding was given a more solid appearance by an outer wall of pine planks or painted hides. But from the first the fighting stations were known as "castles," though they had none of the strength or permanence which the name seems to imply. They may have looked top-heavy, but this was

not really the case, and, compared with the vessel's hull, they were flimsy.

In the "forecastle," a name which survives to this day, and in the "aft castle" or "somercastle" the British soldiers assembled in the olden days during a passage over sea. The man in the crow's nest would warn the captain if the enemy were sighted, and the weapons of the period would then be made ready; bows and arrows, javelins, spears, pots of quick-lime, stones, even harpoons if the transport had been a whaler. Grappling-irons were popular, and could sometimes be worked from the bowsprit end, for the soldiers had no idea of manœuvring a ship, but desired to convert her into a stable platform where land tactics could be employed. A strong posse of the bravest men would assemble in the vessel's waist to carry the enemy by boarding as soon as she had been grappled with hooks of steel.

Naturally enough, when warlike operations terminated and the borrowed ship was returned to her owner, the temporary scaffoldings, which had served their purpose, were demolished. But this statement, which is true of preceding centuries, ceases to be true of the fifteenth. After 1400, as we can see well enough in the pictures of Carpaccio and Memlinc, the castles ceased to be mere temporary scaffoldings, and became integral parts of a merchantman's architecture. Our knowledge is not at present sufficient to state with certainty why this was the case. But one of the most important contributing causes was the employment of cannon at sea.

The early development of artillery is a very obscure subject. We are told that guns were used at Crecy in 1346, but behind the shadow of tradition there is no substance of fact. In the archives of France, however, there is a receipted bill for a piece of ordnance manufactured for the king in 1375, and the items of the bill, which was very heavy, supply at present the earliest information as to how a mediaeval gun was made. The engineer first took bars of iron about three inches broad and an inch thick and welded them together as securely as he could into the form of a tube. This he inserted into a smoothly rounded coat of a wood that was unlikely to split, and bound

it tightly through all its length with rope of the toughest quality. When this lashing had been neatly finished off, he engaged skilful cobblers to stretch and stitch a final integument of the stoutest leather. The resulting work of art was a barrel, open at either end, which by itself would not make a gun. To complete the weapon a " chamber " was required, a powder-and-shot-holder, which could be driven into the barrel, in some such way as the mouthpiece and bowl of a tobacco pipe are welded together. The explosion of the powder would separate the two parts, and so facilitate reloading; indeed it might do so prematurely and injure those whom it was designed to befriend. But the risk of accidents was diminished by the shape of the gun-carriage, which, in a clumsy fashion and with the aid of a wedge, locked the chamber into its place.

The earliest guns, in short, were breech-loaders, and, although they looked very cumbrous and clumsy, they had quite a small bore. It has been estimated that the heaviest projectile, thrown by them, was a ball, probably of lead, weighing eight or nine ounces.

The first of these guns to be taken on board an English ship were mounted in the *Christopher of the Tower* in 1410. There were only three of them, and they took their place, with becoming modesty, beside the other man-killers then on board —the arrows, javelins, and harpoons. They were confessedly man-killers and nothing more, and at the beginning of the fifteenth century had still to prove that they were worth the space which they required. At the close of the fifteenth century, however, they had helped to remodel the British merchantmen, and were now given pride of place on solid and substantial castles, which were not only able to withstand their recoil, but to support small masts or flagstaffs as well. *The Pageant of Richard Beauchamp Earl of Warwick*, a beautiful manuscript in the British Museum, which was probably illustrated about 1485, shows several finely drawn ships of this type. They are still the beamy merchantmen of the Middle Age, but they rise fore and aft into substantial upper works, which are pierced with embrasures for cannon.

It was upon craft of this kind that Henry VII. decided to improve, when Bosworth gave him the crown. We have seen that he created four epoch-making ships to serve as models for his generation. Of these the *Regent* was the most remarkable, and of the *Regent* it has been said that she so far eclipsed all ships that went before that she deserves to be compared with Nelson's ships rather than with any of her predecessors. This is high praise for Henry, but a little misleading. For all Nelson's ships were fighting ships, and the *Regent* was a merchantman.

Unhappily there is no authentic portrait of her. The model in the Science Museum at South Kensington of a Flemish carrack of the fifteenth century from the designs of a marine artist whom we know only by his initials, W. A., will aid the imagination in its efforts to understand the massiveness of the hull and the shape which the castles had by this time assumed. But those who study photographs of this model must remember that the *Regent* was a very much bigger vessel, and made the Flemish carracks look old-fashioned. The most reliable information about this remarkable ship is to be obtained from the surviving specifications of her equipment. She had a big foremast with a topmast above it; a huge main mast, with a main topmast and main topgallant, two mizzen masts, and an outlicker to balance the bowsprit. Each mast had its own canvas, the sails being square on fore and main, and triangular on the mizzens. The bonaventure, or aftmost mizzen, was sheeted to the outlicker, and the bowsprit had a square sail of its own, with circular holes in the clues so that it should not pick up the water. The sails which, like the hull and like the shields along the gunwale, were richly ornamented with paint of divers colours, were no longer reduced by reef-points but by strips of canvas called "bonnets," which could be unlaced or replaced as the wind increased or diminished.

The size of the ship is attested by the presence of eight anchors, and even more by the provision of three boats, all of which could be lifted on board by a sturdy if somewhat rudimentary apparatus.

But the most remarkable feature of the *Regent* was her

armament. She had no less than 225 guns in all, a number so far exceeding any total ever carried before that it would be vain to institute comparisons. The surviving inventories do not say how these weapons were disposed, but the arrangement was probably the same as in the *Sovereign*, and the *Sovereign* had a double-tiered castle in her bows and a triple-tiered castle in her stern. Here the guns frowned formidably through their embrasures, not only over each broadside, but over stern and bow, and (for the terror of would-be captors) inboard over the waist.

If the total of guns were alone considered, the *Regent* might truthfully be described as mounting more heavy pieces than any vessel built since. But we cannot too often remind ourselves that these weapons in spite of their clumsy construction were analogous in destructive power to the brown besses that won the battle of Waterloo. Wood, rope, and leather no longer entered into their composition, for it had been found possible to make the welded bars into a tube sufficiently safe for repeated explosions by shrinking over its outer circumference "reinforce-rings" or bracelets of steel. But the cannon, with all its improvement, was still designed and intended as a man-killer.

And for that reason the *Regent*, in spite of changes of rig which separate her, as the poles apart, from the one-masted craft of the Middle Ages, was still in conception mediaeval—the strongest armed transport till then ever built.

It would have been strange and disappointing, with such a father, if Henry VIII. had not been a lover of ships. But from boyhood he was wildly in love with them; and even after his accession he enjoyed nothing better than to take his part in sea pageantry. He would dress himself in the "livery" of his own seamen, and pulling down Thames in his gilded barge, would pipe his orders on a jewelled call "as loudly as upon a trumpet." Greenwich was his favourite residence, for Greenwich lay between Woolwich and Deptford, both of which he converted into royal dockyards for the building of further ships. Nothing would suit him but to create a masterpiece, which should make the *Regent* not only insignificant but obsolete.

At the time of his accession a tremendous stride forward had been made in the development of artillery. For long it had been obvious that unless an efficient breech-block could be devised, guns of the pattern which the *Regent* mounted could not with safety be enlarged. Therefore the minds of the ingenious turned in a new direction, and the muzzle-loading gun was invented. The new weapon was cast solid in its matrix or mould, and the barrel afterwards bored or drilled with patient toil. There were probably no gun-founders in England when Henry VIII. came to the throne, but in the Netherlands, and especially in Mechlin, the crafts-men were turning out weapons in every way as perfect as any-thing Nelson used. These weapons appealed in a subtle and peculiar way to Henry's destructive instinct. He sent large orders to Mechlin, then set up foundries himself, and deafened the Londoners by his experiments at Houndsditch.

It was not long before there came to him a brilliant inspira-tion. Why not revolutionize the art of war at sea by mounting these murderous weapons in his ships ?

The shipwrights threw cold water on the royal proposal, and had no difficulty in proving that the stoutest " castle " ever built would collapse, like a house of cards, under the discharge of " great ordnance." Henry recognized that ship-wrights could alone build ships, and that what they said was undoubtedly true. But for all that he would not be thwarted. Their arguments proved no more than that the Mechlin guns could not be mounted in the " castles." That argument did not affect his resolution to see the new weapons mounted somewhere else. Let them see to it if they valued their lives !

James Baker was the architect of genius who satisfied the king's craving and saved the necks of himself and his fellow craftsmen. The ships, he argued, could at least take the big guns as cargo, and therefore the place of the guns was the cargo deck. The lower deck, nay, the very hold of the ship must be pierced with apertures through which the weapons could be fired ; and the apertures must be fitted with water-tight doors so that the ship might run no risk of foundering. He adapted to his purpose a French cargo-lading watertight

THE DEPARTURE OF HENRY VIII. FOR THE FIELD OF THE CLOTH OF GOLD, 1520

From an engraving after the picture by Vincent Vulp at Hampton Court

It is interesting to note that Vulp, with first-hand knowledge, shows little difference between the *Great Harry* and her sister ships

door called a " porte " ; and he fearlessly gashed his ordnance holes through the very ribs of his lovely vessel's flanks. The guns, which had smashed down houses of brick and walls of stone, were taken on board and mounted on wheeled trucks, which were shackled to the inner walls of the ship. For firing purposes they could be pulled with their muzzles through the ports by means of ropes and pulleys. And when they were fired they came inboard on the recoil, and the portlids, if need be, could be shut.

Thus was accomplished the greatest revolution that till then had ever taken place in sea architecture. Henry had invented a ship which carried a broadside sufficient to blow his own *Regent* out of the water.

The *Henri Grace à Dieu*, or, as she has ever since been affectionately called, the *Great Harry*, did not inaugurate the new type, but she served in a very magnificent way to popularise it. There is more than one portrait of her, and the student of them should be careful not to expend his admiration on anything but the novelties. In her masts and spars, her bowsprit and outlicker, her flags and colours, her double-tiered forecastle, her triple-tiered after castle, the endless embrasures in her upper works, and their multitudinous little guns ; in short, in all the features that attract the eye, the *Great Harry* did but proclaim what she shared in common with the *Regent*. The observer must look carefully and scan the dark side before the open ports will reveal the heavy ordnance which proclaim the first British battleship.

Henry VII. created the *Regent* out of a desire to show his countrymen how to win wealth and prosperity and how to broaden their knowledge and experience in the manner best suited to their natural characteristics and environment. Henry VIII., an infinitely more self-centred man, created the *Great Harry* out of an egotistical love of self-assertion. Henry VII. increased the number of his royal merchantmen because he wanted more samples to popularise his scheme. Henry VIII. increased his royal battleships because he soon saw that their tremendous efficacy as engines of war would enable him, if he had enough for all emergencies, to snap his fingers in the face

of the world. Henry VII. built at least four ocean carriers; Henry VIII. gave his crown security and his sceptre weight by raising the number of his "battleships" to the tremendous total of eighty-five. A fleet of such proportions and such unanswerable power no European monarch had ever before possessed, or indeed ever dreamed of. The *Great Harry* in herself could not shape or even change an epoch, but a fleet of *Great Harrys* could dominate it.

The student of British history should bear this constantly in mind, for otherwise the reign of the second Tudor king is inexplicable. With his legs astride, his thumbs in his belt, his figure gross, and his face cruel and bloated, Henry VIII., as Holbein painted him, would appear to have been selfish, sensual, intemperate, not the man to change a nation's destiny. Yet Henry dictated to cardinals and princes, pulled Wolsey down from his pinnacle of power, divorced the daughters of foreign kings, sent to the block his wives and ministers, butchered and mutilated bishops and abbots, broke the bonds that bound England to Rome, and swept away the monastic system; and neither Pope nor emperor, temporal alliances nor spiritual prohibitions, could alter the trend of his policy by the breadth of a hair.

That is an astonishing performance which has puzzled many who have sought the explanation in the king's will, or his intellect, his moral purpose, or political outlook. And yet the solution, though screened by the silence of the sea, is simple enough when discovered.

As soon as he was seated on the throne Henry laid down the keel of the *Mary Rose*, and from the time of her launch the provision of new ships built, as she was, exclusively for war, was ever his first care, his dear delight, his chief concern.

That and that alone is the secret of his strength. Colossally selfish he may have been, but selfish folk often know how to look after themselves; and while men of greater intellect still suppose that England's walls are made of water, Henry VIII. saw the truth, constructed them of wood, and armed them, for the salvation of his realm and himself, with the biggest guns that money could buy.

CHAPTER IV

HAWKINS AND DRAKE

THE success of Columbus in 1492 was the occasion of deep displeasure in Portugal. In the eyes of the Portuguese he had stolen a march on them and penetrated into their own preserves. From the beginning of the century they had been struggling to reach the Far East by a circumnavigation of Africa, and just as success seemed in their grasp and the heel of Africa had been rounded, an unscrupulous interloper in Spanish pay had found a short cut to the haven of their dreams. Feeling ran so high that for a while the cloud of war descended and its shadow was reflected in the hearts of men.

Both parties to the dispute, however, eventually decided to lay their quarrel before the Pope, and thus prevent the shedding of Christian blood. The Pope heard the case and gave a shining example of what can be effected by the detached state of mind and the spirit of compromise. On a specially prepared map showing the world as it appeared to the suitors before his throne, that is to say, with the eastern parts of Asia on the other side of the Atlantic, he drew what we should call a meridian, passing from pole to pole, through the centre of the ocean which Columbus had crossed. This line, the "line of Pope Alexander VI," was to be held sacred by all the world. Both parties, if he understood their arguments rightly, desired to reach the Orient, there to find prosperity and wealth's increase. The world, as they were beginning to understand it, was a large place, and the eastern parts of Asia should

afford room and satisfaction both for Spanish and for Portuguese. Each nation had found its own route thither without trespass to the other state. There seemed no reason why this happy arrangement should not continue indefinitely if due precautions were observed. He therefore ordained that all discoveries made to the westward of his line should belong to the Spaniards, and all discoveries made to the eastward of his line should belong to the Portuguese.

This famous settlement, with minor changes which need not here delay us, was accepted by both the rival states. Its sane common-sense had the admirable result of preventing bloodshed. It was not intended, least of all by the Pope, as an inspired compendium of world geography. It was not intended, least of all by the Pope, as a formula which would remove all further grounds of dispute. As a rule, when two litigants lay hold of the same spoil, it is difficult to separate them without strife. But here were two companies of seamen, sailing in opposite directions, and never setting eyes on one another until their return. What need but to prescribe within rigid limits the regions to be explored by the rival pioneers ?

Such was the view held by Pope Alexander in 1493. But the amazing results of the next thirty years put quite a new complexion on his famous award.

In 1497 Vasco da Gama, working under the patronage of Manoel the Fortunate, left Lisbon with three ships, doubled the Cape of Good Hope, anchored on 2nd March, 1498, in the roadstead of Mozambique, and then, taking a leaf out of Columbus's book, forsook the customary landwise sailing, and, striking boldly across the ocean, reached the coast of India at Calicut. The voyage, which occupied ten months and twelve days, was not only the most remarkable so far achieved, but opened up an era of prosperity for Portugal for which the annals of Europe afford no parallel. The *Arabian Nights*, with all their surfeit of gems and spices, of jewelled swords and turbans and bales of silk, are beggared by the romantic bills of lading over which the merchants of Lisbon cast their eyes. The Portuguese carracks rolled homeward round the Cape more

richly furnished with precious stones than Aaron's breastplate, and leaving behind them, like a trail upon the waves, the soft aroma of galingale and frankincense. While Almeida and Albuquerque built up an eastern empire which stretched from the Persian Gulf to the Malay Straits and beyond, while Lisbon became the entrepôt of the world where all the tongues of Europe gabbled over chaffer, the monarchs of Portugal bestrode their burnished throne with all the glittering glory of Solomon.

Little wonder if the achievements of Columbus were forgotten; little wonder if the world's greatest navigator was allowed to die in poverty. If his claims were well founded, if he had discovered the far east, where were the mosques and minarets? the envious Mohammedans? the friendly Hindus? and the pageantry and merchandise of the oriental bazaars? Were his despicable discoveries anything more than a group of savage islands, less blest than Britain and further west than the Azores? In short, had he ever really reached the coast of Asia? Was it not more reasonable to suppose that all he had accomplished was to proceed further into the Atlantic than any of his predecessors?

Such were the questions raised alike by courtier and by clown; and though there was cause for perplexity, all common minds agreed that the Columbian voyage could not be accepted as proving that the world was a sphere.

This was the point at which the great explorer joined issue with his critics. He knew in his bones that the world was round; and therefore the best proof that he had reached the Indies could be afforded by a circumnavigation of the globe. The search for a strait which should lead him back to Europe through the Indian Ocean and round the Cape of Good Hope —this was the all-absorbing theme of his later years. At his death he left it as a rich legacy to the school which he had founded in the land of his adoption.

The Spanish explorers kept his aim well in view, and, as men who unpack a crate containing a costly vase cautiously but eagerly pull away all impediments to a sight of it, so the successors of Columbus, with a perseverance which no

succession of failures could daunt, ceased not to rummage through the parcel of the western isles for their vision of the golden image of the East. Columbus had steered due westward only to be baulked by the backbone of what we call Central America. His disciples turned both northward and southward from the point where their master had been crossed. Both routes proved troublesome and disappointing. The Caribbean Sea, the zone of Spanish enterprise, threatened to prove itself, like the Mediterranean, land-locked on three of its sides. The southern explorers, following the trend of the coast, so far from making progress further west, were driven gradually eastward towards Spain; from the Gulf of Darien to the Gulf of Maracaibo and from the Gulf of Maracaibo to the inhospitable mouths of the Orinoco. The northerly explorers, who knew something of the coast of Cuba and deemed it part of the mainland, thanked God at Cape Gracias à Dios, hurried westward along the coast of Honduras, only to be foiled by the bight of Guatemala. At this point the trend of the coast slightly to east of north led them to conclude that their stars were unlucky, that Cuba and Yucatan joined hands to thwart them, and that the Caribbean was a cul-de-sac.

But the extraordinary endeavours of such men as Ojeda and Bastidas were bound in time to yield good results, and at last the luck changed. It was found that Cuba was not part of a continent. The Gulf of Mexico revealed itself and was in part explored. At length at its eastern extremity was found the wonderful empire of civilized men over which Montezuma reigned: the empire where silver was so little accounted of that it was used for domestic furniture; where the common people could weave glittering fabric out of the plumage of iridescent humming birds; and where gorgeous flowering shrubs, unseen before, paled beside the snakes that coiled round their stems and the parrots that shrieked in their branches. The explorers were succeeded by the Conquistadores. In 1519 Cortez landed on the shores of Mexico, and in spite of the valour of the inhabitants, conquered their land for his royal master and converted it into a province of Spain. From this time forward a stream of gold, which grew with

the years in depth and width, was annually set in motion; and the King of Spain found cause to bless the name of Columbus, and drew himself up haughtily when the wealth of Portugal was mentioned.

About the time that Mexico was first visited, another wonder came to light. A mad swash-buckling adventurer named Balbao, hearing strange stories from a native cacique, climbed through the thickly-wooded heights that fringe the coast of Darien, and, reaching the summit, saw stretched before him the wide expanses of the blue Pacific. To believe such a stretch of waters to be an inland lake was impossible. The world, which had seemed to be shrinking before the enterprise of man, now loomed up mysteriously in new and unexpected vastness.

Two results followed naturally from this Pisgah sight of 1513. The successors of Balbao crossed the isthmus of Panama, built ships on the further side, and began to push with their accustomed boldness into the unknown. Most remarkable among many pioneers was the son of a swineherd in the Estremadura—Francisco Pizarro. To him it was given to discover and subdue an empire as famous and as wealthy as Mexico, the land of the Incas, the land of gold mines and silver, of rubies and emeralds, the wonderland of Peru. The mines were set working with forced labour, the treasure of the Incas was found and ravished, the sepulchres were ransacked for buried riches; and the King of Spain's wealth made him richer than Croesus, and, what was infinitely more pleasing, richer than the King of Portugal.

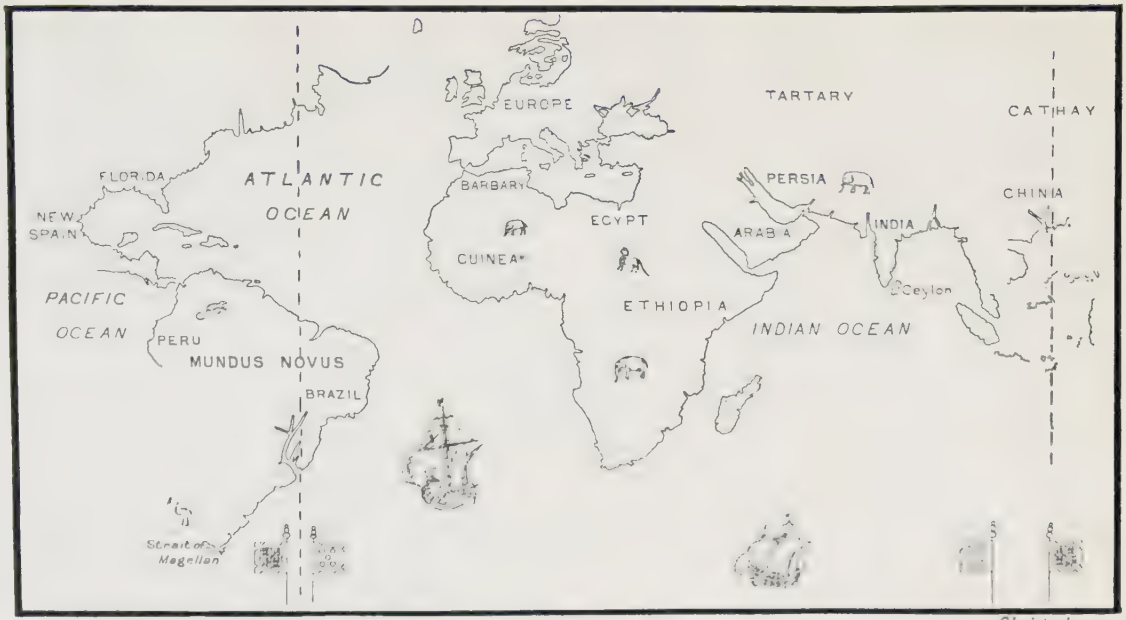
Magellan's voyage set the crown upon Spain's felicity. Magellan was inspired by Balbao's discovery to attempt once more to find the "strait" which Columbus had said would lead back to Europe. He found it. Forced his way through in defiance of mutiny and famine; and ploughed the first furrow through the South Pacific. He did not live to complete his task, but Sebastian del Cano brought the *Victory* back past Borneo, and Celebes, and Java, through the Indian Ocean, round the Cape of Good Hope, and anchored in the mouth of the Guadalquivir in September, 1522.

As soon as the logs were examined, the real truth began at last to dawn upon a startled world. Between the regions conquered by Almeida and Albuquerque and the regions conquered by Cortez and Pizarro stretched an ocean wider than the wide Atlantic—an ocean which even Plato had never suspected. The world to which Columbus had first set sail was a "new" world, and it belonged exclusively to Spain.

It is not necessary at this point to stop and enquire how far the Spaniards and Portuguese in their wonderful achievements were indebted to maritime instinct and seamanlike qualities. It is sufficient to note in passing that without such virtues they must have failed, and that states possessed of similar virtues ought to have been able to compete with them. And this consideration brings us back to Great Britain during the period already passed in review.

In the days when both Portugal and Spain had been humble suitors before the Papal throne, Henry VII., as we have seen, decided that Great Britain should turn its back on the continent and find new chances of expansion beyond the western horizon. The decision of Alexander VI., while determining the routes to be followed by the suitors at his court, did not preclude other states from the quest, so long as they did not poach upon Spanish or Portuguese preserves. Henry's explorers made their landfall in America months before Vasco da Gama reached India, and years before Cortez invaded Mexico. They confined themselves to the North Atlantic, and by royal command studiously avoided the Spanish zone. They sought no conquest of empires or fresh accession of territory, but markets and outlets for British endeavour. They came and went unmolested. They founded the first oversea nursery of British maritime power in the "new-found-land" fisheries; and they built upon that foundation by insisting that every participant in the enterprise should on his second trip bring an apprentice. And so things stood when Henry VII. died.

Upon his death the crown passed to Henry VIII., but the sceptre to Wolsey. For nearly twenty years the great cardinal guided the destinies of the nation; and so great was his



Callender's Naval History *Christophers*

THE PARTITION OF THE GLOBE

Magellan's discovery of a western route to India led the Spaniards and Portuguese to arrange a fresh demarcation to supplement the Papal award of 1493. Both boundary lines are shown in this chart specially prepared in 1529 by Diego Ribero of Seville

ambition, his power, and his glory, that to this day Englishmen are dazzled and robbed of their good sense when they speak or write of him. Sweeping in his great red hat and scarlet robes across the page of history, he appears to make kings and princes bow at his approach. As a Continental statesman he is certainly impressive, as a British leader he is not. He undid the work of Henry VII.; beat England back from the seas into the dusty vortex of European politics; attempted to use the growing power of his country to substantiate schemes which should have died with the Middle Age; stringently forbade all transatlantic voyages; and put back the hands of the clock. When he fell, and the king took the direction of affairs into his own hands, England was too deeply implicated in Continental affairs to draw back. As a result the long period of nearly forty years covered by Henry VIII.'s reign, famous as it was for the creation of new ships, was almost barren of mercantile expansion, maritime discovery, or any other form of oversea enterprise.

We have seen what Spain and Portugal had in the meantime accomplished. In theory, they were acting under Papal direction, but in practice they interpreted Alexander's award as a donation of unlimited applicability. In 1493 they had accepted the "line" as an expedient to prevent the effusion of blood; in 1547 they regarded it as dividing the globe into a Spanish hemisphere and a Portuguese. To the modern reader it will seem passing strange that undiscovered parts of the world, such for example as Australia and New Zealand, should even in theory pass to Portugal or Spain as soon as they should appear on the map. But such was the sixteenth-century point of view, in which the two maritime powers expected their neighbours to acquiesce.

When Henry VIII. died, there returned from Spain to England the venerable Sebastian Cabot, who had organized voyages for Henry's father. Despite his years, he offered his services to the boy king, Edward VI., and chose a propitious moment for doing so. The government had felt strong enough to abrogate the privileges of the Hanseatic League, and craved for fresh worlds to conquer.

Sebastian Cabot's ideas of geography, incorporating what he had learnt in Spain, differed widely from those he had entertained when under the influence of Behaim's globe. He now thought of the planet as dividing its land masses into four nicely balanced continents—Eurasia and Africa; North America and South. The two Americas, admittedly, were separated from the old world by the Atlantic, in the middle of which were groups of dull islands such as the Canaries, Azores, and Cape Verdes. Beyond the Americas, on the further side, lay the unexplored Pacific, which his fancy filled with fabulous Moluccas, rich isles of spices, and gardens of gems. The Spaniards had found their way to this paradise by a south-west passage, and the Portuguese by a south-east passage. To Sebastian Cabot's logical mind it appeared obvious that there must also be a north-east passage and a north-west passage, and he wanted England to possess them both.

The north-east passage was attempted first, and Willoughby and Chancellor set out to find it. They got as far as the Lofoden Islands without mishap, but there they separated. Chancellor experienced good fortune. He made the White Sea, and, landing somewhere near the modern Archangel, travelled in sledges as far as Moscow, and laid the foundations of the remunerative Muscovy trade. Willoughby was unfortunate. He struggled valiantly to force a passage to the eastward, but was blocked by the northward trend of Nova Zembla. Driven back by the pitiless ice, he was forced to winter in a frozen latitude, and after terrible hardships, most manfully endured, he perished with every shipmate who had sailed with him.

Thus there was a double inducement for Englishmen to embark on further voyages. The wonderful profits of Chancellor's journey to Russia appealed to their acute commercial instinct; and the pathetic log-book, kept by Sir Hugh Willoughby to the bitter end, stirred the same emotions that in after days sent a nation into mourning when something similar was found by the body of Robert Falcon Scott. While there was any exploration to be done there were Englishmen

to do it ; and from that first journey the equipment of British expeditions went steadily forward so long as there was any passage to be forced or any pole unfound.

The story of the search for the north-east passage, in spite of its valour and hardihood, in spite of the discovery of "North Cape," in spite of the fact that Richard Hakluyt undertook his great book to immortalize the story, is unintelligible to-day unless we remember that accurate world maps had still to be made. Scientists still believed that the great double continent of Eurasia contracted near the pole like South America and Africa, and that an all-English route to the Indies could be found and used without offence either to Portugal and Spain.

This view, which naturally enough prevailed throughout the pro-Spanish reign of Queen Mary, was abandoned, it should be clearly understood, not for political but for geographical reasons. Under Queen Elizabeth the patronage of the crown was transferred from the north-east passage to the north-west, not because the government was assuming a different attitude to the maritime powers, but because the north-east passage was proving itself impassable, and, of alternative routes to India, none but the north-west remained. In spite, therefore, of the breach with Rome, the foreign policy of Elizabeth was correct to the point of handicapping British sea enterprise and driving it into the Arctic Circle.

The search for the north-west passage had its own tales to wake the imagination : the treasure-hunts of Martin Frobisher, conducted amid the murderous grip of the icefloes ; the hardihood of Henry Hudson, whose bold schemes were stained with treason and crowned with tragedy ; and above all the astonishing contributions to the science of navigation made by John Davis of Dartmouth. The evolution of the first mariner's quadrant, and the practical application to everyday needs of Mercator's projection, would have sufficed alone to justify the search, even though as a road to India the north-west passage was at last pronounced to be impracticable. That, however, was not until Baffin's last voyage in 1616.

Long before then the entire course of British history had been changed by the exploits of two famous master mariners, who cannot be classified in any of the groups so far specified.

John Hawkins, the elder of these, was the son of a wealthy Plymouth shipowner, and was born in the year 1532. He inherited in generous measure the estates and attributes of his father, and put them to excellent use. He was a man of less originality than John Davis, of less chivalry than Sir Hugh Willoughby, but he was a great business magnate with novel methods of making business thrive. To him it seemed foolish to pursue the quest for an all-English route to India, when more profitable opportunities lay neglected. New markets, of course, must be found and new trade-routes exploited. But to Hawkins the best outlook presented itself in the growing oversea empires of Portugal and Spain. He dealt first with the Portuguese colonies, and established a flourishing trade with the Canaries and Brazil. This line suggested another, even more advantageous ; and, in an eventful day for Great Britain, he loaded his ships with slaves in West Africa and sailed for the Spanish West Indies.

Modern readers must guard against the temptation to judge him harshly. He was violently criticized in his own day, especially by the Spaniards and the friends of Spain in England, and he has been much censured in our own day for a completely different reason. There is a danger of supposing because our own criticisms are acceptable to ourselves, that the criticisms of Hawkins's own contemporaries are equally worthy of our regard. Hawkins may be called the founder of the slave trade, and by any civilized person to-day the slave trade stands condemned. Queen Elizabeth is not held guilty of importing slaves into the West Indies. Yet she was a partner with Hawkins, looked to share his profits, and occupied a responsible position in the eyes of the world, which Hawkins himself did not. If respectable people of the nineteenth century, both in England and America, had to be persuaded (much against their will) that the employment of negro slaves was wicked, it stands to reason that their ancestors, three centuries earlier, saw in the traffic nothing morally wrong. It

was for quite another reason that Hawkins was blamed in his own day, and if readers will put slavery out of their minds, they will be in a better position to judge the issue.

Hawkins's voyages, in a financial sense, were amazingly successful. The first made him the wealthiest man in Plymouth. The second made him the wealthiest man in England. The third ought to have made him the wealthiest man in the world. As a matter of fact, his ships were caught in a gale, and needed to be re-conditioned before recrossing the Atlantic. He entered the Spanish harbour of San Juan de Ulloa, not otherwise than as he had entered already the harbours of Borburata, Margarita, and Rio de la Hacha. The Spaniards accepted him as their guest, exchanged visits of ceremony, pledged themselves by vow, bond and seal, by every tie that can hold a man to his word, and, under cover of fair regard and loving protestation, planned with fire and sword, with treason and ambuscado, to destroy him without leaving a trace. The attempt would never have been made by them if the Spaniards had foreseen the smallest probability of failure. By superhuman endeavour Hawkins escaped from the inferno to proclaim their infamy to the world.

It is the Spanish conduct that needs analysis to-day, and it is by sixteenth-century documents, not by modern books, that the Spanish conduct should be analyzed. There were three parties involved in Hawkins's western voyages : Hawkins himself, the Spanish colonies in the West Indies, and the central Spanish government. Hawkins desired to trade with the Spanish colonies, and the Spanish colonies desired to trade with Hawkins. Philip II. forbade such intercourse. He had no control over Hawkins. He enjoyed a nominal control over the Spanish colonies. He forbade the Spanish colonies to continue the traffic. His prohibition proved ineffectual, and the traffic continued. He thereupon sent out an armed force to receive the English captain with fair words and then knock him on the head. It was a time of profound peace. The relations between England and Spain were amicable, and were backed on the Spanish side by expressions of regard which may be described as effusive. The executioners

employed by Philip were professional soldiers, their victim had been trained in the counting-house. If the execution had been completed, an official apology would have been tendered to Elizabeth, together with proofs of the trespass which had rendered it necessary, and the King of Spain would have given ocular demonstration of the guiding principle which governed his conduct. He would not allow any one unblessed by the Pope to enter the New World which the Pope had given him. Hawkins was a heretic.

There were many in England in those days who would have asked for little modification of Philip's attitude. Confessedly the New World belonged to Spain, and confessedly Hawkins was a trespasser. To extend sympathy to Hawkins was to condone misdeeds and to stir up animosity between England and Spain. Behind this view, which was strongly represented on the Privy Council, was an uneasy feeling that England was but an island in the North Sea and Spain a colossus straddling the globe.

Hawkins's view was very insular and very English. He would have agreed that the Pope had given the New World to Spain; he would have agreed that he was a trespasser in Spanish preserves. But he challenged the right of the Pope to hand New Worlds about as if they belonged to him; and he challenged the right of any man on God's earth to offer you a cup of wine in the name of friendship, and while you drank it to stab you in the back.

He put the whole case before the Privy Council, and asked that punitive measures might be taken. The Privy Council responded with a prompt and most emphatic negative.

It is important to bear in mind what this decision meant. Hawkins was a private individual, differing from others only in the wealth which enabled him to carry his plea to the highest court in the land. The government of England was vested in the Queen in Council, and the government decided against the plaintiff. The government, in other words, bowed to the Papal decree which distributed the unoccupied portions of the world, and withheld its reproof even from those who made butchery of Englishmen.

It may be added that Hawkins was content to abide loyally by the government's decision.

This should have been the end, and would have been the end, if it had not been for Francis Drake.

Drake was born near Tavistock towards the close of Henry VIII.'s reign. His father was what we should call a country parson, and what his contemporaries called a "Lutheran." The Devon folk were slow to accept the new creed, and hunted Parson Drake and his family out of the county altogether. In the next reign Protestantism became the State religion, and the fugitive clergyman was appointed chaplain to the royal ships laid up at Chatham. The future scourge of Spain was thus in the most impressionable years of boyhood housed in the finest vessels afloat. The family fortunes declined again when the crown passed to Mary, and the harassed chaplain, with a large family to provide for, agreed to his eldest son's urgent plea that he should be apprenticed to the master of a merchantman. Francis Drake was then probably in his early teens. At eighteen he had a ketch of his own, and, with the world before him, set sail for Plymouth, where he entered the employ of Hawkins. He got on well, rose to the rank of skipper, and, in an hour fraught with consequence to the world, made one of the fleet which the Spaniards ambushed at San Juan de Ulloa.

When Hawkins applied to the government for aid and met with a stern refusal, Drake decided to make Hawkins's cause his own cause and read the Spaniards a lesson.

Before considering the steps he took, we should acquaint ourselves with the law governing quarrels at sea in the sixteenth century. There was, as we have seen, no principle of trade protection. Every merchantman had to look after herself, and where merchantmen abounded (as in the English Channel) pirates were plentiful. If any British shipowner suffered losses at sea he had resort to the High Court of Admiralty. If the evil-doers were of English birth, the Court could deal with them effectively; if they were not of English birth, then the Court was willing to issue letters of marque, which entitled the holder to carry on reprisals and exact retribution for

damage done. If in his effort to exact retribution, the wronged party was captured by the fellow-countrymen of the evil-doer, then his fate turned upon these letters of marque. If he had lost them, or omitted to take them out, then he was at the mercy of his captors. If he produced them, then the practice of the age demanded that the captors should sue him only by process of law.

Privateers must not be confused with pirates. In the sixteenth century they stood to pirates as the mongoose to the cobra. Drake had nothing of the pirate in him, whatever the Spaniards might say. On the other hand he was undoubtedly a privateer; and in his first punitive expedition against the Spaniards he was an unlicensed privateer. Hawkins had appealed for State aid and been refused. Drake sailed "westward-ho" without it. This in no way altered his status; it only affected his fate if he was unsuccessful. With two small ships and half a hundred men, he plunged into the strongest part of the Spanish oversea empires. If he had been caught, he would have been hanged on a fifty-foot gibbet as John Oxenham was hanged. Drake knew that perfectly well. He carried his life in his hand.

After he had been absent many months his friends gave him up as lost, and not unnaturally. And then one Sunday morning in 1573 his little ship dropped anchor in Plymouth Sound, and the congregation forsook the church in the middle of the sermon and crowded down to the waterside to hear with their own ears what had befallen. Drake had landed on the isthmus of Darien, captured Nombre de Dios, held up the mule trains that brought from Panama the riches of Peru, fought and routed the Spanish soldiers who guarded the treasure, and brought the best part of it home.

For a while the unlicensed privateer hid himself, not knowing what construction the government would put on the affair. But before long secrecy became needless. The relations of England and Spain were for other reasons daily becoming more strained, and if Drake was willing to conduct another punitive expedition, the government saw no reason to stop him.

He sailed in consequence in 1577 upon his famous voyage

of circumnavigation. Cutting himself off from all hope and all chance of rescue, he forced a way through the Straits of Magellan into the South Pacific. He encountered storms that should have engulfed him; came through them unruffled; and discovered Cape Horn. Turning northward he re-equipped and re-conditioned his fleet out of Spanish prizes; and boldly entered the port of Lima, the capital of Peru. Luck deserted him. The hue and cry was raised; and the governor ordered the pick of the soldiers to embark in the best of the ships. While the tocsin clanged its wild summons, and the troops buckled on their armour and raced to the beach, Drake rowed serenely round the harbour and cut the cables of all the ships. Then hoisting his sails, he accompanied them seaward, leaving the distracted Spanish warriors without the means of pursuit. Between Lima and Panama he once more intercepted the Peruvian trade, and this time while it was still afloat. He did but tranship the cargo; and, after refitting his *Golden Hind* near the modern San Francisco, and making a search for the Pacific end of the north-west passage, he set his prow westward-ho again; crossed the Indian Ocean, rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and in 1580 came safely home in a ship now laden with precious stones and ballasted with gold.

It would be difficult to say in terms of modern money how much damage the Spaniards suffered, but they thought (perhaps rightly) that Drake had taken more than had been lost at San Juan de Ulloa. Their first duty was to lay him by the heels, and, if he now possessed a license, to petition the British crown. They had omitted the first formality, but without the bartering power which his person would have given them, they made their formal petition. Queen Elizabeth invited the Spanish ambassador to accompany her to Deptford where Drake's ship was lying. The infatuated gentleman accepted. He stood proudly by her side as she informed her bold mariner that the Spaniards called him "Pirate"; and he smiled sardonically when she bade the accused deliver to her his sword and kneel upon the deck. But history is silent as to his attitude when with quiet majesty the Queen gave the accolade and said, "Rise, Sir Francis Drake!"

Elizabeth would have preferred peace, if peace had been possible. But Philip would not play fair. He ordered corn from England to relieve a Spanish famine ; received the corn, refused payment, seized the ships and imprisoned the crews. If heretic powers would not repent of their sins, they must be chastised and brought to their knees. The Spanish Inquisition was empowered to try English mariners, and to brand and burn without pity. The sympathy of England for the revolted Netherlands did but fan his wrath. Englishmen for years had traded with Spain. They were now seized and consigned to the galleys. The presumption of Philip lost all restraint, and his cruelty was despotic. England remembered the ships which great Harry had built, and nerved herself to oppose the world's oppressor. War may be said to have broken out in 1585.

In that year Drake, now no longer a privateer, set sail with the most ambitious expedition that this country had equipped. He descended upon the West Indies as a General and a Conqueror. He laid siege to San Domingo, the capital of Hispaniola, and captured it ; he crossed to the Main,[1] and invested Carthagena, the proudest city in the New World. The Spaniards put every obstacle in his way, and fought heroically. He outwitted them, out-generalled them, and took the place. The Spanish soldiers were the best in the world. He assailed them where they were most strong ; he converted their fenced cities into a heap ; he met them in the field and thrashed them. Englishmen, he told their envoys, must be allowed to think as they please, to worship as they please, and to sail unmolested where their merchandise was welcome. If Spain thought differently, then Spain would share the fate of Nineveh and Carthage, and other sinks of iniquity.

Philip was scandalized. To him the old world and its landmarks seemed to be toppling over. England had already humiliated the Pope, and sought to frighten the son of the Emperor Charles V. He gave orders that a great Armada should be prepared ; that England should be invaded, conquered, and converted into a Spanish province.

[1] The northern coast of South America.

Elizabeth and her Council grew uneasy. In 1587 they commissioned Drake to make a reconnaissance and discover what he could of the Spanish preparations. Drake gladly set sail, having now at his command some of the noblest royal ships of the kind which Henry VIII. had invented. These had never yet been in action, and to the Spaniards their secret was as yet unknown. Many of the Spanish ports, if they had heard of Drake's approach, would have grown uneasy, for his boldness and success were proverbial. But there was one place in the Peninsula which feared him not at all—Cadiz, the principal naval base; the headquarters of the oared battleships which had won every battle at sea since the days of Salamis. At Cadiz, ringed about with castles and with fortresses, lay the principal galley-fleet in the world; a fleet similar to that which had won Lepanto; a fleet which yearned to match its guns and rams with the insolent armed merchantmen of Drake.

Drake had no intention of disappointing them, or of denying them the encounter which they desired. Always bold beyond his strength, always ready to run risks which prudence condemned, always in perilous extremity buoyant with hope, he made straight for Cadiz, and prepared to fight the dragon in the dragon's lair. With an economy of force reminiscent of Gideon, he discarded twenty-one ships of the twenty-five he had at his disposal, and entered the harbour with four royal ships only—the *Bonaventure*, *Golden Lion*, *Dreadnought*, and *Rainbow*.

The Spanish galleons, magnificent in their discipline and ostentation, insolent in their unquestioning certainty of success, raced forward with all their hideous beaks levelled to a single line of thirsty steel. Nearer they came, impelled by the volition of a single mind and the sinewy strength of five thousand naked slaves. Nearer they came, and Drake opened fire. Broadside echoed broadside in the four royal ships, and heavy guns answered from the Spanish galleys. When the smoke cleared away it was seen that victory had already declared itself.

The Spaniards, with all their bravery, found themselves

impotent. They could not get within range to use their beaks or rams, and their heavy gun fire was not sufficient in so brief a battle to affect the decision. The four English ships depended on heavy artillery alone. Tier above tier the ordnance was massed, and its deadly discharges found no resistance in the naked bodies of the helpless galley-slaves. The Spaniards would not for a while accept the verdict. They obtained fresh motive-power, and renewed the attack. But conviction came in the futility of massacre, and in the impunity with which the victor administered his chastisement.

The history of the world was altered in an hour. The era of galley warfare was ended.

And not only did the British type triumph in this affray over the battleship which had gone unchallenged for a thousand years. The British insistence upon the freedom of the seas triumphed over the Spanish claim that the oceans of the world were fenced about by Papal decree; and the British sailor's preference for hard hitting with clean weapons stood out in contrast with the deviltry of those who at San Juan de Ulloa had crucified the British hostages.

There were sixty vessels preparing at Cadiz to carry troops to England. Now that he had rendered the place innocuous, Drake re-conditioned his fleet from these and afterwards burnt the empty hulls.

When the news was brought to Philip, he raised his shaking hand with a nervous gesture and for long space uneasily fingered his chin. Heartless observers said with point that Drake had singed his Majesty's beard.

CHAPTER V

THE GREAT ARMADA

PHILIP II. of Spain did not understand the incursion into Cadiz as we understand it to-day. To him it appeared a fresh insult, a fresh outrage, a fresh proof that England must be compelled to apologise for gross violations of international law. His own officers did their best to conceal the real truth from him; and he learnt from their lips, not that his fighting-ships had been put to ignominious rout, but that the English corsair had made a secret raid into Cadiz and destroyed only such ships as were defenceless and incapable of hitting back. He saw in consequence no reason why his plans for the invasion of England should be postponed or modified. The vital necessity was to lure Elizabeth into a belief that peace alone was in his mind, so that Spanish preparations might be pushed on without fear of interruption and English counter-preparations be brought to a full stop. Ambassadors in consequence approached the Queen with honey on their lips and guile beneath their tongue. This deception, on the whole, may be said to have succeeded. Philip's preparations were not again interrupted, and Elizabeth half believed his lying words.

The plan for the invasion of England in 1588 centred round the Duke of Parma, one of the most eminent soldiers this world has produced, and Philip's viceroy in what we to-day call Belgium and what then was called the Spanish Netherlands. Elizabeth and her councillors were apt to focus their anxiety on the other side of the North Sea; modern students

of the campaign are apt to rivet their attention too exclusively upon Spain. The success of the campaign depended on the ability of Philip and Parma to join hands.

The expedition was to be a military expedition like the expedition of the Athenians to Syracuse. Parma was to supply the leadership, the staff-work, and the bulk of the troops. He enrolled no less than 30,000 soldiers, in those days considered a large army, and built flat-bottomed boats for their transference to England. These were constructed at Antwerp where they could be suitably accommodated until they were wanted: and, when a Dutch flotilla came to the assistance of Elizabeth and effectively blockaded the mouth of the Scheldt, Parma dug a canal whereby they could be transferred from Antwerp to Dunkirk. His resolution made him a formidable foe, and induced people in England credulously to believe that he could land upon their shores whenever he liked.

Parma himself made no such mistake. He knew that the moment he put his 30,000 men into flat-bottomed boats they would cease to be an army and become mere prey for the first armed vessel which sighted them. To him it was clear that his army could never be safely committed to the water unless the sea was held by ships acting in his own interest, and sufficiently strong to drive away all possible assailants. What he wanted was a double fence, an avenue, of heavily armed ships, stretching from the coast of Belgium to the coast of Kent, down the middle of which his ferry-boats could ply their trade in safety.

Here then was the need of the immense fleet which was preparing in all the ports of Spain and which in spite of Drake's raid was completed by the third week of May, 1588.

The ships composing this fleet differed considerably in size, but were almost all of one character. There were four galeasses, vessels in which the Spanish shipwrights had attempted to combine a heavy armament with propulsion by oars. But, apart from these four, which were too few in number to affect the issue, the Armada was made up (like any mediaeval British fleet) of armed merchantmen. There was

no idea in the mind either of Parma or of Philip that the expedition, to which they stood committed, required the use of battleships. They were opposing themselves, not to the Turk, but to the English. The English, it was known, made use of armed transports and nothing else. The comparative value of one armed transport as against another turned on the men inside her. The Spanish ships were to be manned by the finest soldiers of which Europe could boast: the Queen of England, it was well known, had hardly sufficient trained soldiers to guard her person. In addition to the mariners, eight thousand in number, Philip sent in his ships twenty thousand troops who were to guard the Duke of Parma while he made his crossing, and afterwards land themselves and reinforce him.

The Spanish ships are often described, in words borrowed from the diction of the time, as "tall ships." This is an admirable description, if it is taken literally. But the word "tall" must not be interpreted to mean big. They certainly were big, some of them. But tall is descriptive and big is not. The Spanish ships differed from the English ships as a mediaeval castle towers above a modern fortress. But this does not mean that the tall ships were superior. No engineer would build walls like those of Conway or Carnarvon to defend a modern force from modern guns. The best Spanish ships were like Henry VII.'s *Regent* described on a previous page; vessels whose excessive freeboard lifted itself skywards in timber towers too fragile to take the recoil of any but medium-sized guns. The only safe answer to heavy artillery is invisibility.[1] The Spanish ships stood up like monstrous targets, which no self-respecting gunner could miss. Their own broadsides, as contemporary witnesses agree, were wasted in the water; but this was from lack of range, not lack of accuracy. They did not fire, as some have opined, over the heads of the English. They relied in chief on infantry with pike and musket and the resolute grappling-iron, and the missiles from their ordnance fell short.

[1] In this connexion it is instructive to note that the first "submersible" was designed by William Bourne in 1578.

Mercifully for this country the sea secrets of Henry VIII. were secrets still. They may have been betrayed in outline to the Spaniards, but, if so, constructional difficulties prohibited their use, and kept the broadside battleships still an English monopoly. There had been no *Great Harry* built in Spain, nor any workable imitation. In England, by contrast, the *Great Harry*, if she had survived, would in 1588 have been regarded as obsolete. More than half a century of experience had shown the English shipwrights many openings for improvement, and when John Hawkins, in 1577, was put in charge of the queen's ships, he inaugurated another drastic reform which may be said to have brought the British battleships to perfection.

All Henry VIII.'s ships were in essence "converted merchantmen," that is to say, apart from their armament they conformed in their lines to cargo-carriers. The mediaeval cargo-carrier, as we have seen, was in length not much more than twice the measure of her beam. While warfare at sea was conducted on mediaeval principles, while vessels at the conclusion of hostilities, that is, were expected to return to the merchant service, there was an obvious advantage in adopting mercantile architecture as the most suitable standard. But such reasoning could not, after the accession of Henry VIII., be applied to ships built for the "Royal" navy. Such ships were designed for battle only, not for the conveyance of merchandise. There was, therefore, argued Hawkins, no conceivable excuse for retaining mercantile architecture. The mounting of heavy guns had ruined the cargo decks. Why, then, retain the semblance of cargo decks when the reality had disappeared? He accordingly pulled out the keel of the new royal ships until the measurement was more than three times that of the beam. The first vessel of the new type was christened *Revenge*, and not only did she outclass all her predecessors in speed and sailing qualities, but she would have been a welcome addition to any of Nelson's fleets, the units of which would have differed from her in size and in size alone.

It is not possible to state with any precision how many ships of the *Revenge* type were ready for use in 1588. Hawkins

had been in office for eleven years, and had, in addition to new programmes of construction, rebuilt in the new style many vessels of the older fashion. But Philip of Spain had ordered a fleet of 150, and the crown ships of Elizabeth numbered no more than 34. Resort, therefore, was had, as in former wars, to the shipping of the realm, that is, to the merchantmen belonging to the several ports; while privateers, such as Drake, Grenville, and Raleigh, put their vessels loyal-heartedly at the service of the Queen. The difficulty of the problem prevents us from analysing the value of these requisitioned ships. Some were large and some quite small. Some may have been as old-fashioned as the *Regent* (though it is unlikely), and some, we know, were even better than the best of the royal ships. The number is an easier problem to solve. When authentic news of the Spanish total was received, an effort was made to raise a fleet of similar proportions in this country, and the effort met with complete success. We may say, then, that the crown of Elizabeth was safeguarded by thirty-four of her own ships, and some hundred and fifty contributed by her loyal lieges.

Quite apart from the build of the English ships, which in itself would have secured them the victory, the navy of Lord Howard enjoyed another advantage which would have counted as a determining factor, even if the vessels had been no better than those of Spain. Not only were the British sailors incomparably superior to the Spanish, but thanks to the trend of sea events since the death of Henry VIII., there was already growing up in this country a school of naval officers. Henry VIII., in spite of his love for violent revolutions, would not allow his beloved ships to be commanded by any but military men. "Captains" and "lieutenants" were sent on board to discipline the rough sea fellows, and the "master" and "boatswain," the normal officers of an English ship, were obliged to accept a secondary station. But a new breed had arisen since the *Henri Grace à Dieu*. Chancellor, Davis, Frobisher, Fenner, and above all, Hawkins and Drake, were men who had risen to eminence in sea affairs, not from military rank, but from maritime aptitude. They had proved conclusively by 1588

that it was better and quicker to teach sailors to fight than to teach soldiers to be sailors. They relied as certainly on mariners as Philip relied upon infantry. The point need not be laboured, because the principle has been accepted by all nationalities to-day. But in 1588 the wisdom of England had still to be endorsed by the experience of war.

When Elizabeth came to the throne, Spain and Portugal shared the maritime honours of the world. In 1580 Philip II. had conquered Portugal, and added that kingdom's wealth to his own. The Armada, in consequence, started from Lisbon, a harbour capable of accommodating easily all that the ruler of the world required.

By 20th May the vast multitude of ships cleared the Tagus estuary, and made northward at the pace of the slowest. The king had enjoined that cohesion was to be a first principle of conduct, and that all vessels must keep the flagship in sight. He had also enjoined that this great expedition was to be supplied with everything requisite for sustenance and comfort. But on this head he was soon to learn that the injunction of a king is no proof against the dishonesty of contractors. The fleet had not been many days at sea before the state of the provisions compelled it to return; and on 9th June, after labouring ineffectually to weather Cape Ortegal, the Armada put into Coruña. The Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of Medina Sidonia, straightway informed the king that the expedition was an impossible undertaking and should be abandoned without further thought.

This advice has often been quoted to prove the silliness of the man to whom Philip had committed the great enterprise. But Medina Sidonia, it must be remembered, was acting not in a military but in a viceregal capacity. His counsel was that of a wise statesman, and it would have been well for Philip if he had taken it. Philip, however, was bent on the conquest of England. Parma said it was possible; and the Duke of Medina Sidonia was a nobleman of such eminence that he could be trusted to exact obedience even from a force so heterogeneous and cosmopolitan as the floating province which we call the Armada. To abuse the Duke, as English-

men are so fond of doing, is to discount the honour of the men who outmatched him. It is no virtue to eclipse a fool.

The most egregious folly in 1588 was shown not in Spain but in England. This country had no experience of sea-campaigning on a big scale, and was therefore liable to make mistakes. But in Drake the instinct of the race was personified; and, by what he had done already, Drake had entitled himself to a hearing. Drake told the Privy Council that all the English ships should be massed into a single Grand Fleet, which should proceed to the coast of Spain and destroy the Armada as soon as it emerged from its hole. The disinterestedness of the advice was apparent, seeing that, if it were accepted, Drake himself would be relegated from first to second place. But the Council would not adopt his advice, or would not adopt it in its entirety. They argued that, unless there was a fleet at Dover, Parma would immediately land in Kent; and, even if Parma ceased to exist, and a single English fleet became practicable, then, if that fleet proceeded to Spain, the Armada would elude it and, racing for the Channel, would find the shores of England undefended. They had no objection to reinforcing the Western Squadron, and Lord Howard of Effingham proceeded to Plymouth and took charge over Drake's head. But they insisted that the Western Squadron should guard the western approaches, and that an Eastern Squadron, comprising some of the best ships, should be stationed in the Strait of Dover to prevent Parma from making his jump. Thus England's sea-power was weakened by an element which has entered into almost all her big wars ever since. The reins of government and the conduct of sea-affairs must be in different hands. The government must have the last word, and a fighting service, if it is to be effective, must be diligent in its obedience. The fleet, in short, must obey orders even when it knows them to be wrong.

The Western Squadron was based upon Plymouth, and thither it returned at the end of the first week in July from a cruise in the approaches to the Channel. It was known that the Armada had left the Tagus seven weeks earlier, and all men were mystified as to where it had gone. The Council

were convinced that Philip had changed his plans; and anxious to save the tax-payer's pocket, ordered Lord Howard to disband his fleet. But Howard was Lord High Admiral, that is to say, an officer of state vested with all the functions now exercised by the Board of Admiralty. As England's maritime viceroy he considered the order suicidal; and, disobeying it with lordly independence, he kept the fleet in being at his own expense.

It was on Friday, 19th July, that Captain Fleming of the *Golden Hind*, a small look-out vessel which Howard had left upon his cruising ground, returned to Plymouth with the news that the Armada had reached the Lizard. According to tradition, which there is no reason to dispute, he found the leaders of the English fleet playing bowls upon the Hoe; and his news, there can be no doubt at all, was received with something like consternation. For even the most optimistic participant in that immortal game would not have dared to hope that Philip had forbidden the Armada to attempt any offensive until it had joined hands with the Duke of Parma. The English leaders, naturally, felt that they were caught like rats in a trap, and would be imprisoned until a landing had been effected; or be overwhelmed by weight of numbers, as, one by one, they emerged.

The Spaniards, so far, had done very well. Undeterred by their first miscarriage, they had spent a month at Coruña and reconditioned their fleet. Surveyors had inspected all goods supplied, and everything was of the best. Bad weather was experienced in the Bay of Biscay; but practically all the ships came through without material damage; and off the Lizard the Duke found himself with 126 ships, including the four galeasses. It was not quite as big a fleet as Parma had asked for, but very little inferior. Medina Sidonia held a short thanksgiving service, feeling that half his task was done.

He now drew up his force in strict army formation. Nosing ahead, like cavalry, went the galeasses. Behind them came the main body—the infantry, so to speak. And astern came the camp followers, forty-five vessels, which were carriers only and too weakly armed to put up any fight.

Sir Francis Drake

From the portrait still preserved in his country-house Buckland Abbey, near Plymouth

The "infantry" contingent, as the most important, demands analysis. It was subdivided into three sections, like an army ashore. The centre was commanded by the Duke in person; the right wing by Alonso de Leyva, and the left by the best sailor in the fleet—Juan Martinez de Recalde. The flanks were not aligned on the same front as the centre. Like a bird's wings they were bent back, in part to cover the camp followers, in part to facilitate a re-dressing of the whole array, if the English were discovered either to north or south of the road along which the Spaniards travelled. Philip's own belief was that the ragged English mariners would not wait for an encounter with the best soldiers in Europe, but would retreat before his host as Drake had done at Lima. But this belief was not shared by all, and therefore no useful precaution was omitted.

During Saturday the Armada, moving at what may be called a snail's pace, so as to retain the order of battle under marching conditions, passed from the Lizard up Channel towards Plymouth. At eventide it became clear that ships were emerging from the Sound and doing their best to work to windward. The Spaniards could not fail to interest themselves in this movement, and began to dress by the left. The number of the English were, however, so absurdly small, that on board Medina Sidonia's flagship the opinion took shape that these stragglers must constitute merely a detachment of the enemy. Where, then, was the main fleet? Was it still in Plymouth, and were the stragglers its vanguard? Or was it farther up Channel, near the Isle of Wight, or in the Strait of Dover? No certain answer could be given to these questions; and the Armada slackened its unambitious pace, and hovered to westward of Plymouth lest, overshooting the mark, it should fall to leeward of the enemy's base.

The day following, Sunday, 21st July, is memorable as the day of the first big battle at sea fought under the new English-made conditions. The Armada, 126 ships strong, still hovered off Plymouth, with its centre turned towards the harbour mouth; with its left wing bent at an angle and somewhat huddled by the change of front; and with its right wing

swung round pivot-wise and furthest up Channel. In every Spanish ship the infantry stood ready for the fray; the musketeers in the front rank, as was seemly; the pikemen behind, and specially picked men with grappling irons to catch the slippery island ships and hold them till they cried for mercy. Smart army officers, with coloured sashes over their breast-plates and nodding plumes in their morions, gave their last words of exhortation to those who were to avenge the insults which Spain had suffered. To the northward the same small band of ships, which had attracted attention on Saturday night, still held the Spanish eyes.

That is what Drake had intended.

Much may be done between Friday noon and Sunday morning, and the English had worked hard. In spite of the wind, which blew dead in their teeth, they had warped out of the Sound with as many perhaps as sixty ships, leaving behind some forty to follow when they could, and a small force of ten to make short tacks to windward and throw dust in the Spanish eyes. The main body had worked their way towards the coast of France, right across the front of the oncoming Armada; and, unobserved, had altered course and returned to westward and to windward of their foes. When first observed by Medina Sidonia, they came plunging from the south; ready, that is, to impinge on the rear of what was in its essence a military formation. The Duke trembled for his exposed right wing, and then for his defenceless camp followers. But the English contemptuously passed these by and made for the north-west corner of the field where the Spanish left flank was nearest to the wind, and therefore furthest from the chance of rescue.

Even then the Spaniards did but dimly comprehend the gravity of their peril. Out-generalled, out-manœuvred, outplayed and outwitted, they thought that they still could fight. But even in that they were mistaken. For to the English sailors they opposed not even the right kind of soldiers; their strength lay not in gunners but in infantry or foot. Lord Howard, the Admiral, and Drake, to whom he had entrusted the direction of affairs, brought up their ships, not

in a way to please a soldier's eye, but, like a foray of red Indians, in single file. What was still more puzzling to their opponents, they did not approach as an army should, face forward and shoulder to shoulder; but with prows pointing to the west of Plymouth, and at such a distance that no weapon in the whole Spanish Armada could reach them. It was as if they were running away from the likeliest point of attack.

And then at last the thunder broke, and the Spaniards realized the full extent of their tragedy. Each English ship, in turn, reaching what may be called the point of aim, delivered a devastating broadside of unanswerable artillery into the defenceless ranks of useless infantry. Each English ship, in turn, having delivered her message, swung round on her heel to take station astern while her guns were loaded again. The finest army ever embarked in ships since the days of Greece and Rome were neither more nor less than cannon-fodder for the merciless English guns. No reply was possible; and it says much for the magnificent discipline of the Spaniards that, instead of setting every stitch of canvas and flying for shelter, they furled their sails and halted, so that the wind should bring the English down to them and enable Spanish weapons to be used. The effect of this first shock can still be traced in surviving Spanish documents. Sailing orders ceased to be observed; collisions were frequent; damage to spars considerable; and two fine vessels, one of them a flagship, were so damaged that their loss was inevitable. But if the shock was shattering, the recovery was magnificent; the Armada remembered what Philip expected of it, and with a supreme effort pulled itself together.

The battle of Plymouth ceased at this point, and ended without a decision. It was not only that Lord Howard was as much concerned to open the range as the Spaniards were to close it, and therefore occupied himself with drawing off to westward, or "running away," as the Spaniards termed it. There was another motive that told strongly with him. If his fellow countrymen had for long been sensible of their peril, and made adequate preparations for the day of reckoning, the Armada might have been destroyed out of hand. But for the

very reason that England is an island and therefore prone at all times to detach herself from Continental concerns, the emergency had come like a thief in the night, and there were insufficient munitions. What is more, since the crisis was naval, and therefore rapid in development, there was no chance of making good the deficiency before it was too late. How eagerly the English sailors seized on the two Spanish wrecks and ransacked them for their last ounce of gunpowder is a thrice-told tale, though the moral is generally omitted. What Lord Howard had to do was to husband his resources, until conditions of wind, of tide, or of shoals seconded his endeavours, and justified him in expending what could never be replaced.

There were two further engagements in the Channel: off Portland Bill on Tuesday, 23rd July, and off the east coast of the Isle of Wight on Thursday the 25th. On the first occasion the fickle wind shifted round to the east and allowed the Spaniards to throw down the wager. The English, for reasons already given, declined to pick it up, and very wisely drew off. Frobisher, however, fell into a pocket of calm under the Bill, and was attacked by all four of the galeasses. Against these he defended himself with splendid heroism until the wind brought friends to his rescue. In the second battle off what is now Ventnor, Howard, Hawkins, and Frobisher made a feint attack upon the Spanish front, while Drake delivered (as at Plymouth) a massed attack on their left flank, in the hopes of pushing the entire Armada on the shelf of shallows at the entrance to Spithead. It was now the turn of the Spaniards to draw off; and having the leeward berth, they quickly turned tail and avoided the pit which gaped for them.

On Saturday, 27th July, just one week after their entrance into the Channel, they dropped anchor in Calais Roads. Technically this was a breach of neutrality. But Medina Sidonia, with diplomatic adroitness, sent a message to the governor of the town, explaining that the Invincible Armada had swept the English out of its way, and, before proceeding to the punishment of heretics, came to greet with good

wishes and felicitations the land of the Most Catholic king. Under cover of fair words and interchange of courtesies, the duke was able to make contact with Parma, whom he urged to come with speed and take charge.

Parma's reply, it is clear, took the heart out of the Spanish fleet. He would be ready to move, he said, in a fortnight! A fortnight!

Even if he had been able to move at once, it is very doubtful whether he would have been in time. The English, nerved to a supreme effort by their very ignorance of what was in his mind, decided to seize what may be called a seaman's opportunity. The Armada lay in an open roadstead, and on a rising tide could be assailed by means of destruction other than gunpowder. On Sunday evening, hastily improvised fireships were ready, and were slung as suddenly as David's pebbles at the giant fleet lying sluggishly at anchor. The Spanish ships, to save themselves, cut their cables in haste and made for the open sea.

With the single exception of the flagship of the galeasses, which accidentally took the ground, they were successful in escaping destruction. One hundred and twenty-four vessels had entered Calais, and one hundred and twenty-three got clear away, untouched by flame of fire. But the English, if they had failed to achieve their direct purpose, had none the less scattered their foes in panic rout. What is more, they had unberthed the Armada upon an inhospitable coast at the precise moment when Parma had sent it word to stay where it was for a fortnight.

Monday, 29th July, found the infelicitous Armada, sadly deficient now in anchors and cables, drifting along the coast of Flanders. No longer was it a compact body, but disintegrated, and broken into three pieces. The wind, as if it had decided to ally itself with Great Britain, swung round to the north-west and blew strongly towards the coast, from which the weary Spaniards struggled to make an offing. Here, then, was the occasion for which the English had watched and waited. They put themselves between the Armada and the wind, in a position of dominant superiority.

If the Spaniards managed to claw off the land, then the powder and shot must be used to the last round for their final overthrow, and if the Spaniards failed to claw off the land, then the banks and shoals, with unseen fangs, would drag them down to destruction.

The battle of Gravelines, as this last encounter is called, must have been one of the most terrible that the eyes of man ever witnessed. The English had been reinforced by the squadron in the Downs, which contained some of the best ships in the Royal Navy, and had received from the soldiers ashore all the powder that could be spared.

Following the example set by Drake at Plymouth, they selected a range to suit their big guns, and poured into the Spaniards such murderous broadsides that the scuppers ran blood. Now and again a fine galleon, reeling from the shock, took the shoals and perished. It is clear from surviving documents that many of the Spanish leaders were of opinion that the whole fleet should surrender; some even urged this course, pleading that no infantry in the world could be expected to stand up to artillery. But the duke, who so little deserves the taunts and gibes bestowed on him, was firm as a rock, and many a dauntless captain from Castile and Andalusia bawled through his trumpet to the English to pluck up courage and come within reach of the Spanish fire.

The battle began at nine o'clock in the morning, and was still raging at five in the evening. But by that time the duke realized that nothing more could be done. Fate compelled him to choose between the English and the shallows, and the shallows seemed to him more likely to be merciful. As he made his decision, the English fire slackened; for again the powder was running out. The Spaniards, in consequence, picked up a last shred of hope, and drifted, rather than raced, to their doom.

On Tuesday, the wind, which had so far befriended the English, suddenly changed sides, and backing round to south-east, put a new complexion on affairs. The Armada filled its sails, and drawing away from the shallows, hastened with not unnatural precipitancy into the wider waters of the North Sea.

ELIZABETHAN SHIP, 1590-1600

The method of furling topsails, the open gallery with its arched timbers, and the broadside of heavy guns should be noted

(*By kind permission of R. Morton Nance, Esq.*)

Those who assess the result of naval engagements generally base their calculations on the total of vessels lost. Judged by this method, the battle of Gravelines is disappointing. At the outset of the affray the Spaniards had 123 ships, and at the close they had hardly less than 118, and perhaps as many as 120. But it is not safe to judge a battle at sea as if its effect could be computed by arithmetic. The battle of Gravelines so battered and shattered the Spanish ships that it became instantly necessary for them to visit harbour. They could remain at sea, of course, for some hours longer, but any delay meant dire peril, for their supplies were running out, the soldiers, unaccustomed to maritime enterprise, were exhausted by privations, and the ships were so damaged that they creaked and groaned for shipwrights to heal their wounds.

Here then was a fresh crisis, and Medina Sidonia felt acutely his ignorance of sea campaigning. A harbour must be found, and instantly; but where? Three alternatives suggested themselves—Scotland, Ireland, and Scandinavia. He dismissed the heretic lands as impossible, and in an hour pregnant with disaster, decided for Ireland. Some ships, he believed, would reach Spain without touching anywhere, but all had better keep together, and he bade the Armada circumnavigate Scotland and look for rest only in Catholic havens.

The decision was doubtless based upon inadequate knowledge of the real state of the Spanish fleet. Soon after the Firth of Forth was passed, the ships that had suffered most in battle were in the hideous grip of a water famine. Food was plentiful, but could not be taken without drink to wash it down. Even the sailors lost all semblance of health. Urgent repairs to masts and rigging went untended and uncared for. The seams of the vessels opened, and there were no working parties with strength enough to man the pumps. The droves of cavalry horses, intended to carry the conquerors in triumph into London, were pushed overboard to lighten labour. But all to no avail. Before the Shetland Islands were reached some of the ships were beyond all human help, and took the ground with careless indifference.

Every day that passed heightened and intensified the agony

of suffering. Even if Spain with all its havens and welcoming arms had been but a few yards away, some of the great galleons could not have stumbled to the threshold. When the Atlantic was reached, with its westerly winds blowing freshly but not unkindly, the fortitude of brave men could no longer endure. The ships lurched upon the cruel lee shore in batches of twos and sevens and tens. In one part of Ireland a five mile stretch of sand was heaped, from end to end, feet deep with broken wreckage. And no one in Ireland realized how utterly vanquished were the would-be victors of England. The garrisons butchered wasted men whose claim to pity was beyond all question, and the superstitious peasantry thought it but natural to knock on the head shipwrecked men of strange speech whose clothes and money attracted them.

De Leyva, the second in command, the close friend of Philip II., was cast away in his mighty ship, the *Rata Coronada*, off Erris Head in Mayo. Recalde, the third in command and the idol of the sailors, tottered into the Shannon and offered a galleon in exchange for permission to fill his water casks. He was refused, lost four vessels off the capes of Clare, and staggered home to Coruña, to die almost as soon as he came ashore. Medina Sidonia, alone of all the higher command, survived to earn the thanks of his monarch and the curses of all succeeding generations. He had set out from Lisbon with some 130 ships, and no more than fifty came home again. He had left Lisbon with 30,000 men, and had lost more than 10,000 by shipwreck alone, without counting those who had perished in battle, or come home to die of their wounds. No disaster in the annals of warfare was more pitiable or more complete.

Philip II. for long could not believe in the full magnitude of the calamity, although the soldiers who survived were his informants. His rebellious subjects in the Netherlands were not very much quicker to understand, though they were nearer to the sources of reliable information. The Dutch did not forget to salute Queen Elizabeth, and they struck magnificent medals in her honour. But they were chiefly concerned with the clash of creeds; and they saw in the humiliation of

the tyrant who had oppressed them a punishment from other hands than those of men. So arose the myth of a mighty storm which had darkened the summer seas of an English August and miraculously delivered the Protestant faith.

This misleading legend is hard to destroy, and is credited by many to this day. Contemporary Englishmen were perplexed by the miracle of their own deliverance, because they had little real knowledge of warfare afloat, and none at all concerning the secret of their own battleships. In that respect they differed hardly at all from their descendants in an age of universal education. The English sailors in 1588 were not misled by the lure of prizes ; nor were they eager to destroy that ship or this. Their main design was to overwhelm the whole Armada in destruction, and that could only be done by sufficiency of munitions or by undermining the enemy's morale. They bided their time, and at Calais and Gravelines struck with their fireships and their unanswerable artillery. The stout sides of oak-built leviathans screened for a while the broken spirit of the Spanish soldiery. But not for long. The catalogue of wrecks from Cape Wrath to Bloody Foreland is the measurement not of climatic disturbance, but of the tempest of the British broadsides.

CHAPTER VI

DECLINE AND FALL OF BRITISH SEA-POWER

SIR EDWARD CREASY, in his well-known book, presents the repulse of the Armada as one of the *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World.* He means that, in its effect upon the imagination and thoughts of man and upon civilization in general, the defeat of the Spaniards in 1588 was as notable as the defeat of the Persians at Marathon or the defeat of the Mohammedans at Tours. With this limitation his use of the word is natural enough ; but to the ordinary person " decisive " means final in the sense that Waterloo was final, bringing, as it did, an end to the war, and the epoch in which it occurred. In this sense the defeat of the Spanish Armada was very far from being decisive. Indeed, it occurred only in the fourth year of a war which went on raging for nearly twenty, and which was still raging when Queen Elizabeth died. If the Spanish soldiers were defeated with calamitous completeness in 1588, their overthrow did not prove that they were bad soldiers : it only proved that they should never have been sent against a strong maritime power over an uncommanded sea. In the years immediately succeeding 1588 the Spanish infantry enjoyed on land all their old reputation for smartness, discipline, and valour. Elizabeth's attempted invasion of Spain in 1589, if it proved anything, proved that the English were not more incontestably masters of their own element than the Spaniards were of theirs ; and the closing years of the Great Queen were saddened by the Spanish invasion of Ireland and all the troubles which followed in its wake.

When this country was definitely committed to the Spanish War, every effort was made to devise some expedient for bringing it to a satisfactory close. But the raising of legions, equal in number to those of Philip and as well equipped and accoutred, was a task too great, in the sixteenth century, for one small island in the North Sea. Hence the minds of many turned to a more feasible experiment—the destruction of Spanish commerce. Expeditions, organized for the most part by privateers and generally financed by them, raided incessantly the Azores, the Indies, and other focal and terminal points of the main lines which Spanish commerce then followed.[1]

Drake always maintained that commerce-destruction would never compel the Spaniards to concede what Elizabeth required, unless she seized a vital stronghold in the Spanish domains (Lisbon, for example, or the island of Terceira) and so obtained a permanent footing on the highways of Spanish trade. But just in proportion as her enemies appeared to grow weak, so did the Queen relax her efforts ; and the removal of her favour from Drake in 1589 denied to the realm the advice and the service of the one outstanding specialist in British maritime affairs. When, therefore, Elizabeth died in 1603, Spanish military strength was not appreciably diminished; her enemies had found in Ireland an effective means of hurting her ; and no method of bringing the war to an honourable close could command a majority vote in the Privy Council.

Elizabeth's successor, King James VI. of Scotland, was no novice in the art of government. He was a man of great

[1] One of these expeditions has been immortalized by the last fight of Sir Richard Grenville at Flores in 1591. Sir Richard in an unusually splendid and magnificent degree, provides us with an example of British sea warfare as it was conducted during the Middle Age. Not otherwise did Edward III. and the Black Prince fight at Les Espagnols-sur-Mer in 1350, counting themselves as generals in a wooden fort and prepared to defend it against all comers. The last fight of the *Revenge* will stand comparison with the Chevalier Bayard's single-handed defence of a bridge-head against two hundred men, or the last fight of Leonidas, or the defeat of the ranks of Tuscany by Horatius Cocles. For Sir Richard with no more than ninety men drove back an army of ten thousand. But this of course was not naval warfare as British sea-officers understood it. Grenville used the *Revenge* much as the Chevalier Bayard would have used his charger. Drake, had he been at Flores, would have fought the *Revenge* not otherwise than when his flag flew in her in 1588.

learning, keen perception, and shrewd native wit. But his cleverness concerned itself with ideas rather than with realities, with theory rather than with practice. None should have been able to see more clearly than himself that the English crown and the Spanish war were by the nature of things inseparable: the privilege of office and its responsibility. But the ruler, who trembled at the sight of a naked sword and had long been an adept at splitting hairs, decided in an hour, pregnant with disaster, to accept the English crown and decline the Spanish War.

South of the Tweed there were, at the time of his arrival, two political parties—the war-weary and the bellicose. Cecil, a son of Lord Burghley and the leader of the more pacific section of the community, thought that any method of bringing the war to a close should be preferred to force of arms. Raleigh, the most original spirit in the opposite camp, was strongly of opinion that every warlike expedient should be attempted until the Spaniards were beaten to their knees. His own pet scheme, on which he had already expended a large proportion of his private estate, was the establishment overseas of a colonial Empire, a union of English-speaking, English-loving, Dominions. He saw, with a vision in advance of his own age, that the British Isles alone could never cope successfully with accumulations of military strength and natural wealth, such as Spain controlled; and that the maritime resources of his country needed employment in a wider world, if they were to be put to their most profitable use. He desired to call into being new worlds to redress the balance of the old; and, in traffic with transoceanic dominions, he wanted the ships of England to multiply until the cross of St. George was the best known flag in all the seven seas.

In 1603, the occupant of the throne was still the moulder of his country's policy. There was therefore a natural stir in the political arena at James I.'s accession. The war-weary party had a preponderance of political ability, and their aims exactly attuned themselves to those of the King himself. They were therefore bound to sweep the board. But such a victory did not content them. By finesse and cunning they

made it appear that those who were antagonistic to the policy, with which the King had associated himself, were the King's opponents, and therefore "traitors." Raleigh, in brief, was tried for high treason, and after a memorable defence, condemned. His accusers, anxious to enlist the sympathy of the public in their own cause, consigned the leader of the anti-Spanish party to the most painful of deaths on a trumped-up charge of pro-Spanish sympathies. There is little wonder, then, that James interposed and commuted the sentence to one of perpetual imprisonment in the Tower. Grateful as he would have been for the complete removal of one who stood for all that he detested most, he could hardly bring himself to treat Raleigh as a felon for a course of action which he was proposing to follow himself. Even in the rancour of English domestic politics, he did not lose sight of the logical faculty which he had cultivated from his youth.

"Blessed are the Peacemakers!" was the new King's favourite text. But blessings are not to be had for the asking, and James did not really make peace. All he did, in the Anglo-Spanish treaty of 1604, was to acquiesce in all that the Spaniards demanded. Let it be remembered at this point how the war had arisen. It had arisen out of a demand by British subjects that they should be allowed to drive their keels through the seas of the world in search of new markets for their goods; and that they should do so without suffering, at the insolent nod of Spain, mutilation, death, or endless labour at the oar. The British Government, feeling unequal to a trial of strength with so formidable an antagonist, had met all complaints with injunctions of patience; and, when patience ran out, had allowed the war with Spain to be conducted and sustained, for the most part, by privateers.

James I. not only abrogated on behalf of his subjects all that Drake and Hawkins had demanded, all that Grenville had died for;[1] not only waived the right of Englishmen to trade with such parts of the world as were included in Pope Alexander's donation; not only withdrew the plea for

[1] The Spaniards, profiting by their misfortunes, had improved their navy, and at James's accession were much stronger at sea than they had been in the days of Drake.

immunity from the Inquisition; but at the dictation of Spain went to the extreme length of making the profession of the privateer a penal offence.

It would be difficult indeed to exaggerate the importance of this measure. For, as we have seen on a previous page, the whole policy of the Tudor kings had been directed to the furtherance of British trade, and as yet the world had not formulated any concept of commerce-protection. Privateering was the only recognized mode of marine insurance. To proclaim it illegal for British subjects was to take away from the State which could make most use of it a power which every other state retained. From that hour the very life of the British mercantile marine began to ebb away like that of a man who is bleeding to death. The British privateers put themselves at the service of foreign countries. Ship-building declined and came almost to a standstill. No wise merchant would trust his cargoes to British bottoms, and in the unpoliced seas surrounding James's realm piracy flourished to an extent unheard of since the days of the Danes. Theoretically no ship flying the British flag (unless she belonged to the King in person) could take any steps to defend herself: for the violent actions of a merchantman are indistinguishable from privateering. Virtually, all the powers of the world were invited to prey on British shipping, and British shipping alone upon the sea was forbidden to hit back. The edifice of British maritime power which had cost a century's building came down in a few short years like a house of cards. In 1606, British seamen captured by Spain were condemned *en masse* to the galleys for trespassing on the further side of the Atlantic. James protested and was snubbed for his pains. In 1613 the Spanish ambassador's ship was compelled to salute on arrival at Portsmouth. The King of Spain protested, and James abandoned a prerogative which had been the proudest boast of his ancestors.

Meanwhile the state of the Royal Navy was hardly more enviable than that of the mercantile marine. James had an instinctive feeling that magnificent men-of-war did play their part in ministering to the doctrine of the "Divine Right of

Kings" ; and he enjoyed presiding at a launch and travelled to Chatham to see the *Royal Prince* upon the stocks. But this with him was in reality no more than a condescension to baubles. He could not bring himself to understand that the sea-boundaries of Britain, without guardian fleets, are no boundaries at all. In his heart he associated battleships, not with sea-police, but with the operations of war ; and since war was over, and peace restored, such expensive playthings seemed to him no longer necessary.

Elizabeth's dependence on her fleet brought to the head of the Navy Board the redoubtable John Hawkins. James appointed to the same position Sir Robert Mansell, one of the most corrupt officials in a most corrupt epoch. The multiplicity of stores in the royal yards demanded in the Treasurer honesty and integrity before any other qualifications. Mansell obtained his post by the charm of his manner, the cut of his clothes, and the pleasing nature of his appearance. He regarded his office as a remunerative sinecure ; and his subordinates and underlings pillaged where they would. The dockyard walls were breached and loopholed, and the material, on which the security of the realm depended, was received outside by accomplices who turned it into money. The secret of the battleships which had vanquished the Armada was sold to foreign states, and from foreign states came the only demand for heavy naval guns. Meanwhile the King lectured on the sovereignty of the seas, and proved by extracts from Holy Writ, classical lore, and the Apostolic Fathers, that such sovereignty appertained to him through grace and not through works.

The decline and fall of British sea-power was viewed with natural satisfaction by those to whom Drake had been a scourge. Not that the Spaniards proposed to revive old schemes for the conquest of Britain. That would have been too flagrant a breach of the peace ; and besides, might have stimulated the people over whom James ruled to revive their drooping navies. It was sufficient for Spain that she could now pursue her schemes of world domination without fear of British interference. In partnership with the house of

Austria she went steadily forward in preparations which were to plunge unhappy Europe into thirty years of desolating warfare. The cockpit this time was to be Germany, and Spanish soldiers could reach the front only by transference (as in 1588) across the sea. England, with a strong navy, could therefore have delivered the world. England, with her sea-power gone, was powerless to play with dignity any part, except the part of spectator.

This James knew well enough, and in his self-appointed rôle of peace-maker he did his best to coax the King of Spain to commit himself by seal and signature to a league of international amity. When he found that the Spaniards were professing one thing and practising another, he suddenly enfranchised Sir Walter Raleigh in order to show that, in a naval sense, England was very much alive. Raleigh equipped an expedition at his own expense, and sailed on a commercial errand to an unoccupied part of the world. The Spaniards took fright at this change of attitude, subjected Raleigh, in a time of profound peace, to one outrage after another, and when he returned to England, heart-broken at the loss of his favourite son, they threatened James with their extreme displeasure if Raleigh continued to live. James, still praying for peace, sent the last of the great English admirals to the block, and, freed from their last cause of disquietude, the Spaniards drew the sword.

The terrible Thirty Years' War began in 1618, and the possibility that England might be involved led to a commission of enquiry into the state of the fleet. The report, which was three times modified, and eventually suppressed, revealed a state of things sufficient to make any lover of his country despair. The work of the Tudors had been stultified, and the maritime sinews of Britain were enfeebled by disease.

James turned with renewed zeal and hope to diplomacy, and thinking to stem a volcanic eruption with wedding favours, dispatched the Prince of Wales to Madrid to court the Spanish Infanta. With the Prince went Buckingham, whom James had elevated to the post of Lord High Admiral, in order that the restoration of maritime prestige might be in safe hands.

The intolerable discourtesy of the Spanish Court brought the Prince and his companion back to England thirsting for revenge. Nothing but war would appease their cravings, and as the unhappy James I. brought his reign to a close, the new rulers of England completed their preparations for the first naval expedition on a large scale since the death of Elizabeth.

The madness and folly of such a venture must give place to astonishment that such an expedition could actually have been fitted out. In Elizabeth's day it was customary for those who took charge of a naval venture to subscribe the funds; and Charles and Buckingham were penniless in comparison with such paymasters as Drake and Raleigh. They might pledge the sceptre and the trident in exchange for ready money, but the only honourable terms on which they could do so would include the forfeiture of place and power if their venture was not financially remunerative. And not only were the maritime capitalists (or gentleman adventurers) gone. The whole breed of sailors had temporarily disappeared, and Charles and Buckingham were obliged to rely (for what was at best a maritime speculation) upon soldiers and military officers. The flagship selected was the *Ark Royal* (rechristened) which had fought the Armada in 1588, and many of the less fortunate ships were wearing the same sails as had done their duty in that memorable year. Nearly one hundred ships were required to carry the troops oversea, for the men to be employed were as numerous as those whom Philip II. had embarked. The Royal Navy could only contribute nine, and the rest had, as was customary, to be subscribed by the mercantile marine. As the mercantile marine was at its lowest ebb, their vessels left much to be desired, and the historians of the cruise chronicle the fact that collisions were incessant.

There was little to complain of in the military officers, many of whom, as volunteers, had seen service on the battlefields of Germany; but the need of the moment was for naval officers, and such as survived had gone abroad to teach their profession where it was welcome. Lord Wimbledon brought his motley armada to Cadiz, and anchoring as Drake had done, in the outer harbour, proceeded to land his troops. When he had

done so, he took what precautions he could to discount the possibility of surprise. It was well that he did so, for the men under his command were not yet advanced beyond the state of raw recruits. Insensible to discipline, they left the ranks, broke into the houses they passed, rifled the cellars, and were soon little better than a mob of inebriates. At eventide they opened fire on their own officers, happily without markmanship enough to do real execution, and so with dissolute revelry they chased the night away. At dawn, returning consciousness found them full of strange aches and pains, and to ease themselves they cast away weapons and equipment. That any of them escaped alive is a tribute to Wimbledon's presence of mind. He bade the ships turn their broadsides upon the place of disembarkation, and within a few hours of landing he put his troops on board again. Forthwith he returned to England, to be greeted with jeers and derision. Needless to say there were no profits from so shameful a transaction. The government therefore lacked the wherewithal to discharge the debts they had contracted. They had not even money sufficient for the pay of those they had employed. The men were left on board without succour of any kind, to die of a pestilence which spread from the ships and devastated Portsmouth.

It was clear that England could not hope alone to administer to the Spaniards the chastisement they deserved. Negotiations were accordingly opened with France, who also seemed inclined to challenge the Hapsburg tyranny. Overtures, however, led to fresh embarrassments. Cardinal Richelieu was at war with the Huguenots, with whom this country had always sympathized. Instead of finding an ally, Charles and Buckingham decided to read the Cardinal a lesson. In 1627 Buckingham set out in person for the relief of the Huguenot stronghold of La Rochelle. He managed to equip sixteen royal ships, and summoned to his flag one hundred vessels of the mercantile marine. La Rochelle lay on an arm of the Bay of Biscay, to which the Isle of Rhé served as a natural breakwater. Richelieu surrounded the Huguenot stronghold wherever the land gave his soldiers foothold. But the waterway

served La Rochelle for supplies, and the English, by occupying the Isle of Rhé, could prolong indefinitely the Huguenot resistance. The English scheme was well thought out by professional soldiers, and Buckingham, successful in landing on the island, sat down before the fortress that Richelieu had planted there. It was now the Cardinal's turn to play. For a winning stroke it was necessary that he should raise a new army, put it in transports, cover the transports with a battle fleet, hurl the British fleet out of the way, set the new army ashore, and cut the British troops to pieces or push them into the sea. All this he did with an ease which still astonishes those who leave out of their calculation the decline of British sea-power. A navy cannot be improvised, any more than a garden. Both need unstinted time and care, and both may be ruined by a few years of neglect.

Wimbledon, on his return from Cadiz, had been subjected to vexatious indignities. Buckingham was less fortunate. He came home only to die. In 1628 the Lord High Admiral of Great Britain was stabbed to death by a maniac, who bought a tenpenny knife on Tower Hill and rode down to Portsmouth to avenge the wrongs of his country and himself. Buckingham was guilty, as many another man has been, of climbing into high places which he had neither the talents nor the character to fill. He could not, even though he exercised all the prerogative of the modern Admiralty, build up again in three brief years the wooden walls upon which the Tudor sovereigns had spent a century.

The years that followed Buckingham's death are among the saddest in our maritime history. Not an English river nor an English harbour was safe from insult. Pirates infested the lower reaches of the Thames and Severn; Portsmouth was entered by foreign ships, who levied blackmail. The citizens of Plymouth were seized by alien privateers and carried off to serve before the mast. The west of England and south of Ireland were raided by Barbary corsairs in search of galley slaves. The once proud ships of London shrank to a total of ten above 200 tons. Foreign fishermen landed in Lincolnshire to mend and dry their nets, and drove off with musketry

the outraged owners of the soil. The Algerine pirates were especially daring. They raided the English harbours, in five years carried off 266 ships, and in every case of capture sold the ship's company into lifelong servitude. The honour of England suffered the last indignity when in 1631 the royal fleet fled before a squadron of alien privateers.

It is clear, then, to those conversant with the situation that an emergency had arisen, an emergency which threatened the national existence. Charles therefore decided, and all too tardily, that steps must be taken to save the State.

Preceding pages have shown that there was as yet no standing battle-fleet, and no theory or practice of commerce protection. In a maritime emergency the King had the power to requisition the ships in private yards, and he enjoyed also the prerogative of deciding what quantity and quality of ships any seaport or maritime county should send him. Obviously enough, the realm could not be protected if Plymouth, when asked for three ships of 500 tons, sent two of fifty. In 1588, when the whole nation was terrified, the seaports one and all, when asked for ships of a certain kind, began to make excuses or offered vessels of inferior rate. The Queen dealt sternly with such backslidings, and funds were raised locally to provide what she demanded. Even when a high-class vessel was already available, it was impossible to take it from the owner without compensation, and a local levy was raised to reimburse him. Out of this usage grew Charles I.'s scheme of Ship Money.

In 1634 he called upon the maritime counties and seaport towns for ships of a certain kind or a money equivalent in lieu thereof. If it be remembered to what extent paralysis had stricken the mercantile marine, it will be easier to understand why " money in lieu of ships " became the rule rather than the exception. The funds came in well, and in the following year the King extended the imposition to the inland counties.

The levy of Ship Money may be said to have inaugurated the first statesmanlike plan for the upkeep of Britain's first line of defence. Financially speaking, the tax cannot be described as brilliantly original. Yet it contained two entirely new ideas. It involved the entire population, instead

"THE SOVEREIGN OF THE SEAS"

From the engraving by John Payne, by kind permission of Messrs. T. H. Parker

This careful picture must have been executed between 1637, the date of the vessel's launch, and 1647, the date of Payne's death

of only a fraction, in the burden of maritime defence, and it was raised to furnish not a temporary mobilization, but a standing battle-fleet. Never before had the crown resorted to inland shires for naval needs, and ships requisitioned to meet an emergency had always at the close of a campaign been restored to those who provided them. Charles, perhaps by accident more than by design, had hit on the plan which all men to-day accept as inevitable.

The King, as all know, was challenged by John Hampden, a member of Parliament who throughout the reign had shown himself foremost in opposition. Macaulay has described him as a "greater master of parliamentary tactics than any of his time," and it would be wiser to accept this description by a friend than to call him, as others have done, a champion of British liberty. Hampden declined to pay Ship Money on the ground that the naval policy of the crown could be justified only by an emergency, and that no such emergency existed.

To students of British naval power Hampden as patriot must stand as an early representative of those inshore folk who, without special study, appoint themselves arbiters of sea affairs. As politician he stands in a different category, for his argument was skilfully moulded. Either, said he, there really is some maritime emergency, or else there is not; if there is not, then Ship Money is illegal; if there is, Parliament should at once be assembled. The King's cause was like to be impaled on one or other horn of the dilemma: and those who follow the duel, mainly for its interest as a prelude to the Civil War, will applaud the adroitness of Hampden's fencing. But it should be remembered that Charles was penitently anxious for the restoration of the fleet, and that Hampden was making such a programme appear the most odious call upon a British citizen.

The unsanctioned tax enabled the King to build a series of magnificent battleships. The *Sovereign of the Seas* was the finest vessel till then ever constructed, and excelled her predecessors by a margin as wide as that which separated Drake's *Revenge* from Henry VIII.'s *Great Harry*. Her title proclaimed to the world at large that England hoped before long

to make a bid for the maritime supremacy which she had lost. In 1635 the first " ship-money " fleet put to sea, and every year for the next four years the national armament grew stronger. In 1636 two of the famous Dunkirk privateers, the *Swan* and *Nicodemus*, were captured, and revealed to this country how the " frigate " was built. By slow and gradual degrees the flag of England began to reassert itself, and when five new ships were finished, the mariners of England took over in some part the responsibility for policing the Narrow Seas. And then quite suddenly the cup of maritime humiliation was filled to overflowing.

Though Spain still conducted her warfare on land with unabated zeal, her most formidable opponents, France and Holland, had discovered the weakness of her sea communications. Cardinal Richelieu built up a navy in the Mediterranean, and checked the transport of Spanish troops to Germany from Barcelona *via* Genoa. The Spaniards were in consequence thrown back upon the Biscay route, and the door afforded by the Spanish Netherlands. This involved a passage through the Channel, and an alliance or understanding with England. The offer of gold was bait sufficient for Charles, and in 1639 a Spanish armada, attended in all its wants by the tiny " ship-money " fleet, was snugly berthed in the Downs. There, like a thunderbolt, Tromp the Dutchman smote it, and of seventy-seven Spanish ships seven alone escaped.

It needed a world-famous event like this to convince slow-thinking Englishmen of their powerlessness at sea. They could not obtain, as we can obtain, a view of the epoch in which they lived. There were no available statistics of the decline of merchant shipping; no authentic information as to the corruption of the dockyards. The Cadiz disaster could be explained by calling Wimbledon a fool, and the disaster of Rhé by calling Buckingham a knave. But when an alien state reduced an English harbour to a slaughter-house, and the fleet of England stood looking at the spectacle without power to intervene, then at last the people began to understand that their glory had departed.

And in the next year the Long Parliament met.

CHAPTER VII

BLAKE

SOME attempt has been made in preceding pages to point the difference between the natural foundations of naval power and the edifice which a wise human architect may erect upon them. In the far Pacific, Japan has, late in time, been awakened to a sense of her grand natural advantages—her fisheries and fishermen, her indented coast and inland seas, her countless islands, her innate faculty for breeding mariners and building ships. Her brilliant and rapid rise to the position of a first-class state, with a first-class position in the world's counsels, is a striking and outstanding example of the possibilities of sea-power, when they are correctly recognized and wisely used.

Similar possibilities existed in the narrow seas off the north west coasts of Europe during the first half of the seventeenth century. England, as we have seen, under the rule of imported despots, ignored those possibilities, with the result, as we have now to see, that the golden harvest of her own sowing was reaped and garnered by a more enterprising neighbour.

The Dutch, when Drake first made a name for himself, were hardly more than revolted provinces of the mighty Spanish empire. The great Queen helped and encouraged them, and they in their turn did what they could to render her assistance. In 1588 they provided a flotilla to watch the Scheldt, and in 1596 they contributed no less than a battle squadron to reinforce an English fleet which in that year sailed for Cadiz. When Elizabeth brought her reign to a close, English and

Dutch were standing shoulder to shoulder in a struggle which at that date was neither successful nor complete. The Queen died, and, as we have seen, England withdrew from the war. The Dutch clenched their teeth and stuck to their guns. They fought on, contesting every foot of ground, until the Spaniards drew back to recover their breath, and agreed to a twelve years' truce.

This interval of repose was utilized very differently in the two opposing camps. The King of Spain, as already shown, proceeded to consolidate his position on land. The Dutch proceeded to develop the heritage which the English had left them at sea.

The sceptre of power is differently wielded by nations as by individuals. Some are tolerant and easy-going, some are exacting and harsh. The Dutch had suffered unheard-of cruelties at the hands of Spain, and their own experiences made them unyielding, unaccommodating, drivers of hard bargains. They endeavoured, wherever possible, to establish a monopoly, to make themselves the sole proprietors, to kill competition, to exterminate ruthlessly all forms of rivalry. Their attitude is well illustrated by what they did in the North Sea. The inexhaustible wealth to be derived from its fisheries gave rise to the saying that the town of Amsterdam was founded on the carcases of herrings. But affluence was insufficient. Not only did the Dutchmen send to the fishing-grounds a fleet that during the season seldom numbered less than two thousand ships, but they dispatched at the same time a battle squadron with orders to disperse or destroy the fishing vessels of any other nation that attempted to share in this most lucrative of industries. The English-born fishers appealed to the crown, and James I. from time to time protested; but the Dutch ambassadors, when they had once learnt his weakness, invariably fogged the issue by interminable debates, into the mazes of which James descended and rambled, until the thread of policy was lost. Even if he had been a man of action instead of a dreamy philosopher, it is difficult to see how he could have retaliated, seeing that he had deliberately discarded the power of the trident. So his subjects were expelled by powder and

shot from fishing grounds which they had farmed for unnumbered centuries, and eventually were compelled to stand helplessly looking on while Dutch fishermen landed in Lincolnshire and elsewhere to dry and mend their nets. Even in the days of the ship-money fleets Charles I. did not dare to try conclusions, lest his battleships should be ignominiously dispersed by the Dutch Fisheries Patrol.

When they had tested the English meekness in the North Sea, the Dutch applied their methods to the wider world beyond. They invaded the dominions which Raleigh and the Pilgrim Fathers had founded on the eastern seaboard of North America, and establishing New Holland in the heart of what was New England, looked forward to the day when Dutchmen should control the entire continent from Florida to the River St. Lawrence. They thrust themselves into the Whale Fisheries which this country had established off Labrador and Greenland, and not content with hunting Englishmen with as much zest and vigour as they hunted the whale, they declared that they would not tolerate the intrusion of vessels other than Dutch in any of the whaling grounds between Nova Zembla and Davis Strait. Their ambition knew no sort of bounds, their acquisitiveness no restraints. They even turned the London merchants out of the Muscovy trade—an exclusively English enterprise [1]—and seized the entire profits for themselves.

But it was not in the North Sea, nor yet in the Arctic that they attracted most attention; for their main object was, not to injure England, but to draw from every ocean the wealth which should enable them to triumph over Spain. When Grotius wrote his *Mare Liberum*, he was thinking, not of Englishmen, who were in Dutch eyes beneath contempt, but of Spaniards and Portuguese, who under one crown still divided the globe between them.

Against the throne of the Philips the Dutch employed the ruthless methods of which that throne had been the first exponent. They waged in the West Indies a war of extermination against Spanish shipping, and in the East Indies

[1] See above, p. 48.

they raided the golden empire built by Almeida and Albuquerque. They seized Carthagena, the pride of the Main, and held it until the Spaniards ransomed it with a sum greater than the annual revenue of England. They seized Guiana, as Raleigh had advised Elizabeth to do, and taking to heart the words of Drake, occupied Spanish islands on the Spanish commercial lines to dislocate Spanish trade. They seized the Cape of Good Hope to dominate the road to India, and established themselves impregnably in the heart of the Orient. Neither Spaniards nor Portuguese received the smallest grain of consideration. If they would not go in peace they were put to the sword, and their settlements made desolate. The Dutch East India Company became the strongest and wealthiest corporation in the whole wide world, and Batavia the headquarters of a merchant-viceroy who wielded more power than many European kings. Even in a region so vast the monopolistic system was preferred. The English, who had reached the East earlier [1] and guided the Dutchmen thither, were less tolerantly treated by those they had befriended than in the North Sea fisheries. They were hounded out of Pulo Run, they were massacred in Amboyna.

The last-mentioned outrage, which the Stewart kings were powerless to avenge, confirmed the Dutch in their attitude of studied insolence to Great Britain. They flaunted their flag in the Narrow Seas and vaunted their claim to sea suzerainty. After Cadiz and Rhé England's navy seemed to them negligible, and they failed even to reply to expostulations. They used the British harbours just as they pleased, and policed the British estuaries.

The battle of the Downs in 1639, to which reference has already been made, put the crown on Dutch enormities. Yet the perpetrators would have found it difficult to understand in what they had offended. They had employed an English harbour for the purpose of destroying a Spanish fleet, and they had done so without seeking English per-

[1] The British East India Company was founded by Queen Elizabeth acting on the advice of Drake and the information obtained by him on his voyage of circumnavigation, and from the papers of the *San Felipe*, which he captured in 1587.

mission. But there was nothing new in all this. In a maritime calculation the British did not count. Only recently they had been protesting against their King for raising enough money to build five battleships. And the Dutch East India Company to guard their interests required annually a fleet of thirty.

The battle of the Downs, that is to say, the violation of British neutrality, came too late to reconcile Charles I. and his critics. In 1640 the Long Parliament gave Holland fresh cause for elation by declaring Ship Money illegal, and in 1642 domestic brawls gave place to civil war.

In the first phase of the struggle, that is to say, between the battle of Edgehill and the surrender of Charles to the Scots after the battle of Naseby, the fleet supported the Parliamentary leaders. This may seem strange to those who remember how completely it was a creation of the King. But the reason is not far to seek. Charles had religiously devoted Ship Money to the purpose for which it was raised, and had found little or nothing to spare for improving the conditions of service. After half a century of neglect there were ample grounds for complaint, and the seamen, infected by the prevalent discontents, looked to the people's assembly to right their wrongs. By so doing they laid themselves open to the most bitter disappointment.

When, therefore, the second phase of the struggle began with the sporadic outbreaks of 1648 at Colchester and elsewhere, the fleet, so far as it was at the moment mobilized, revolted and raised the standard of the King. Colonel Rainborough, who commanded in chief, was dismissed by the sailors and set ashore ; and the revolting vessels, finding Fairfax and Cromwell too potent at home, sailed to Holland and made their headquarters at Helvoetsluys. Shortly after their arrival there, the Prince of Wales (who was brother-in-law to the Stadtholder) came from France to take command, and confident hopes were entertained that he would soon turn the tide of success in his own direction. At first ambitious schemes were planned, and the Prince blockaded the mouth of the Thames. This move while it lasted did more to intimidate the citizens of London than anything which the

Cavaliers had yet achieved. But the Prince had no more than eighteen ships, and not all of these were constant in their allegiance. The blockade was therefore raised; and in October the chief command was made over to the versatile Prince Rupert, who very quickly put a new complexion on things, proving himself as terrible a leader of ships as hitherto of cavalry.

At the beginning of 1649 the Sea Cavaliers were strengthened and reinforced by the folly of their enemies in sending Charles I. to the block. The axe carried the King of England from London to Rupert's headquarters, and a King of England, with a fleet to help him, was in theory at least, very formidable. The cause of the Stewarts, it has been said, was the cause of all kings; and the states of Europe looked on indulgently when Rupert unfurled the Privateer's flag, and swept the Channel of the merchant ships on which the British "Republic" depended for subsistence. So appalling was Rupert's menace, so desperate the Commonwealth's plight, that the new rulers of England quickly realized how imperative it was for them, if their term of office was to be prolonged, to rebuild the fabric of British sea-power. They had steered their way through one revolution. They now turned to another.

To encourage the mercantile marine to take to the seas again, they instituted, as quickly as their means would allow, a system of "convoys." They insisted that all captains employed by the state should keep a log of their cruise, so that the true story should be available, and they fixed capital punishment as the only sentence for such officers as failed to protect sea-borne trade with their lives. The wages of mariners in the state service were raised to a generous figure, and (even more important) were punctually paid. Pensions were introduced, to compensate those who suffered disablement in the service of the state, and to assist the relatives of those who laid down their lives. The dietary, which from time immemorial had comprised nothing better than beer, biscuit, corned beef and salt pork, was enriched by the addition of butter, cheese, vinegar, sugar, treacle, oatmeal, rice, bacon, prunes, currants, and (a very compelling item), brandy.

Privateering, the foundation of maritime successes in the Elizabethan age, was not revived; but, to take its place, a system of Prize Money was instituted. Half of the value of every vessel captured from the enemy was adjudicated as belonging to the ship's company who took her; and, if the foe fought gamely and preferred to sink before surrender, then the victors were to be rewarded by a sum equivalent to the number of guns in the sunken ship multiplied by twenty pounds sterling. Meanwhile swift frigates were built to facilitate convoys; the office of Lord High Admiral was put into commission; and Colonel Pride was detailed, and none too early, to purge the Victualling Office.

These measures were amply sufficient to prove to British seamen, whether they were serving in France, Holland, or Algiers, that they were no longer regarded as pariah dogs, and they thronged back to the land they loved to complete the regeneration of the fleet.

It remained to find a leader for the maritime New Model; and nothing in the story of the Commonwealth is more remarkable than their unerring choice of the right man. In the second month of 1649, and when the menace of Rupert was most alarming, they appointed Robert Blake.

Blake was born in Bridgwater at a time when the west country formed the industrial centre of England. His grandfather and father were business folk and very wealthy. They had many commercial interests, but may not unfairly be described as shippers. They carried the textiles of the district down the Parrat in small vessels, transhipped them to bigger when the Severn Sea was reached, and so to the world beyond. Robert, as the heir to a goodly heritage, was educated as befitted one who would be called to positions of trust. He distinguished himself at the local Grammar School, and at the age of sixteen proceeded to Oxford. Here he attained so excellent a name for scholarship, that he decided to become a don. The Oxford historian tells us that he missed a fellowship at Merton, then the hub of learning, because he was under five foot six. Truly a merciful dispensation! But for ten solid years Blake remained at Oxford;

and went down only when the state of his father's health alarmed him. This was in 1625, the year of the Cadiz disaster; and the Oxford scholar, returning home, found that it was the ruinous state of trade which had killed the head of his house.

At twenty-six he became the director of a firm of shippers in the worst epoch of depression which the shipping trade had ever known. He had eleven brothers and sisters to feed and care for, and no one to help him with advice. Without flinching, he turned from the Classics to bills of lading and charter-parties. Labouring early and working late, he learnt all that there was to learn, mastered every intricacy, and restored the fortunes of his house. For fifteen years he plied his trade, put all his brothers and sisters out into the world, and won the esteem and admiration of his fellow citizens. When Parliament at last met in 1640 he was elected member for Bridgwater. He was a remarkable speaker, very emphatic and delightfully pungent; but he did not care for the atmosphere of the House of Commons, preferring action to debate, and unity to dissension.

In the Civil War he worked wonders. He continued to defend one of the forts at Bristol after all the rest of the city had surrendered. He held Lyme Regis with a handful of followers against a host of intrepid cavaliers, and at length compelled Prince Maurice to raise the siege. Finally, he threw himself in the path of the King as the King marched victoriously westward to capture the legions of Essex, and improvising defences, and soldiers, and weapons, held Taunton, a defenceless city, against ten thousand men.

Blake is often referred to as a soldier. It is difficult to see why. Participation in the Civil War was the experience which he shared with most other contemporaries of similar station. It was for his knowledge of conditions prevailing in the sea-service that he was chosen to command the Fleet; and, if there were other men in the country who knew as much of matters maritime, it is fair to suppose that they did not combine with their knowledge, as he did, a faculty for giving to abstract ideas concrete expression alike with sword and pen.

ROBERT BLAKE

From the portrait by an unknown artist at Wadham College, Oxford, by kind permission of the Warden

There can be little doubt that the sea reforms, grouped together (for convenience) in a previous paragraph, were adopted at his instigation.

At the outset of his sea-career he was faced with the problem which had puzzled the Spaniards in the days of Drake. He was confronted with a Privateer—a Prince among Privateers—whose audacity, valour, ingenuity and coolness enabled him to continue his depredations with impunity. Blake went to the heart of the matter with a directness of thought and method very inspiring to those who commissioned him. First he made it his business to discover Rupert's base, and afterwards to contain, or (to use the modern word) "blockade" it. He had only a few ships; but the men were ready to do his bidding with dog-like fidelity, for a few days' service with him convinced them that he considered their needs at least as carefully as his own; and, unlike the sects and factions ashore, always put England first.

Rupert's base was discovered to be Kinsale, and Blake having closed the door and turned the key, mounted guard outside. To destroy his adversary, Rupert had not merely to come out, but to deploy his ships, and deployment was impossible while Blake held the fairway. It was not till the winter of 1649 that the storms compelled the blockading fleet to relax its grip, and when at last Rupert was free again, he paid his opponent the compliment of leaving the British seas. In a single campaign Blake had saved the state.

Rupert spent the winter as the guest of Portugal, which had recently won back its independence. For 1650 he framed a programme of fresh commerce destruction in the Mediterranean. King John IV. was his sworn friend and gave him every assistance. On a beautiful spring day Rupert dropped down the Tagus without the slightest suspicion that there was a lion in his path. But early as it was, Blake already was there, and with a handful of ships hurled Rupert back. The King of Portugal was furious, and ordered his outward bound Brazil fleet to sweep forth in majesty and clear the way. Blake captured the sweepers, confiscated nine vessels which he found to be of British origin, and

impressed large numbers of the ships' companies whom he found to be of British birth. This was in May. In July the Portuguese fleet, combined with Rupert's fleet, set sail to the number of forty-four. Blake at the moment had ten ships only. With these he hammered the head of the emerging column and drove it back in disorder. Since Portugal committed warlike acts, Blake now retaliated in kind; and re-conditioned his little fleet from coasting vessels, of which he caught scores. In September the interned allies attempted another sortie. They had on this occasion thirty-six ships, and made the most of a curtain of mist. Blake, when he sighted them through the haze, had only three vessels in company. Nine commanders out of ten would have fallen back upon such reserves as were available. Blake again assaulted the head of the emerging column, and, fortune favouring his broadsides, was again successful in repelling a fleet many times as great by denying it the opportunity to deploy. And now with the fall of the year came the Portuguese home-returning fleet from Brazil, laden with merchandise. There were twenty-three vessels, and all were excellently armed, having copied the English fashion. Blake, with eight sail, attacked immediately, sent one to the bottom, captured seven, and put the rest to headlong flight. This success, which would have filled a big chapter in Elizabethan chronicles, so exasperated John IV. that he ordered Rupert to leave his kingdom.

Blake, reading the mind of Portugal like a book, stood aside for the Prince to pass, and then pursued him to the Mediterranean. It was Rupert's intention to traverse the seaway between Spain and the Balearic isles. He gave Formentara as a rendezvous, and reached it with three ships. The remainder sighted Blake, and with drooping wings sought asylum in Carthagena. Thence on a day of tragedy for themselves they darted out in search of their Admiral, and as they did so Blake leaped on them and drove them to destruction on the rocks. Not one escaped.

Negotiations both with Spain and Portugal took on a new tone after this amazing battle. Blake acted as Ambassador

and Plenipotentiary. His letters, couched in Oxford's most elegant Latin, electrified the courts of the Peninsula. The phrasing was conciliatory but firm, and assumed that no potentate in his senses would question the validity of arguments based on British battleships. Portugal made almost unseemly haste to send ambassadors to London to treat of peace; and Spain, still the proudest state in the world, after ruminating for a while about Raleigh's execution and other English concessions to her arrogant demands, pocketed her pride and followed Portugal's example.

On his way home Blake reluctantly decided that he would have to read a lesson to the French who maintained a particularly contemptuous attitude towards the Commonwealth. Meeting a French ship, he summoned her Captain aboard, and the Captain, by some impulse stronger than himself, obeyed. Blake arrested him. The Frenchman indignantly claimed the right to defend himself. "Go back and make what you can of it," replied his captor. The Frenchman went, and, making nothing of it, attended Blake on his travels. Another Frenchman proved not only pugnacious but abusive. He aimed a sudden broadside, and Blake opening fire sent him instantly to the bottom. These punishments, however, proved insufficient, and two years later, Blake found means more efficacious for moulding France to his will. On a day in September he sighted a great French fleet sailing to revictual Dunkirk. He attacked at once, and, receiving the surrender of seven, swept the remainder of the ships to wholesale perdition in the shallows. Whereat the regal government of Louis XIV. humbled itself to the point of craving the friendship of the republican government in London.

But it was one thing for England to impress the military powers of the Continent and the states which had once been classified as maritime: it was quite another thing to win the good opinion of the greatest maritime power the world had yet seen.

The rapid revival of British sea-power could not fail to offend the Dutch. At the time when Blake first went forth

to deal with Rupert, the Commonwealth sent to Holland a special ambassador to treat of questions at issue between the two countries. They chose their man carefully, and selected a celebrated lawyer, Doctor Doreslaar, who was by birth Dutch, and by profession a lecturer at Cambridge. His knowledge of both languages; his eminence as a Jurist; his love for his native and his appreciation of his adopted land, made him specially fitted for his mission. Hardly had he arrived at the Hague and put up at the Swan Hotel than he was murdered at his dinner-table by masked men with every attendant circumstance of brutality. Whatever official explanation might be offered for this outrage, there can be little doubt that it stirred up in England a very bitter feeling against the Netherlands.

When Blake returned from his amazing cruise, the States General went so far as to recognize the English Commonwealth as a free republic and condescended once more to receive its envoys. The Commonwealth selected Oliver St. John, who had been Hampden's counsel in the Ship Money case, and Walter Strickland, who knew the Netherlands at first hand. As they made their way into the Hague, not unostentatiously as Doreslaar had done, but with twenty-five state coaches and two hundred and fifty attendants in uniform, they were pelted with refuse and vile epithets; and not unnaturally returned with their object unattained and with heads and hearts fuming with rage.

In 1651 the Commonwealth decided to map out the future destiny of their country without reference to their all-powerful neighbour. If the Dutch would not admit Britons to a share in the world's trade, then Britons would seize what they wanted of the world's trade in defiance of the universal monopolists. With the deeds of Blake to embolden them, the new rulers of England put upon the statute book a "Navigation Act" which made that of Henry VII. seem unambitious. It was enacted that no goods should be imported into England except in English ships or in the ships of those who produced the commodity imported. When it is remembered that the Dutch had at this time practically cornered the world's

carrying trade, the boldness of this act, and the degree of the government's reliance on Blake, may be properly appreciated.

The efficacy of the Navigation Act, as a measure for the encouragement of British trade, could only declare itself by slow degrees. Meanwhile it was diametrically opposed to all Dutch principles of monopoly, and could not fail to inflame the growing feeling of resentment in Holland which had been excited by the resurrection of British sea-power. Blake spent the summer in clearing the narrow seas of interlopers and privateering strongholds. He recaptured the Channel Isles, and to the annoyance of Tromp, who intended to occupy the group, made himself master of the Scillies. The liberties which the Dutch and other alien traders and fishermen had taken in English havens were ruthlessly curtailed; and the new flag devised by the Commonwealth as a substitute for that which had been humbled at Cadiz and Rhé, began at last to receive courteous and honourable treatment. When it was known that Blake had reconquered the Scillies, the Council of State insisted that the "Salute" should be extorted from foreign ships making use of the English seas; and several Scandinavian merchant-fleets, out of touch with the political situation and proving themselves somewhat sluggish in response, received prompt and drastic correction.

It was inevitable that England, as she braced her sea-sinews and stretched her maritime limbs, should in her own narrow waters exact respect for her flag from lesser powers who had temporarily forgotten their manners. It was equally inevitable, as time went by, that demands for the salute should be made universally applicable and so bring about a collision between British ships and Dutch.

This occurred in May, 1652. The States General, who had no desire for war so long as they could control the world's trade by other means, had given orders for the mobilization of a fleet of 150 ships. Such a gigantic demonstration of sea-power would, they thought, give a more favourable turn to negotiations then in progress with England, especially as Cromwell was known to be eager for a peaceful solution of

difficulties. Psychologically the attitude was a mistake, as Britain is not fond of the bully's tone. But even so, war might have been postponed if the command had devolved on any Dutchman other than the fire-eating Tromp, who could never forget how he had destroyed the Spaniards in 1639.

In May, 1652, Tromp, with such ships as were ready, forty-two in number, repaired to the Downs, the scene of his greatest triumph, and conducted battle-practice. For studied insolence the episode is without a match. On leaving the English roadstead, he met Blake home-returning and in command of thirteen ships. Without a moment's hesitation Blake demanded the salute, and Tromp replied with a broadside of withering contempt. As he did so he hoisted the signal for battle in what was avowedly a period of profound peace. Blake thus found himself opposed to the greatest sea-captain of modern times and in an inferiority of one to three. During the fight he received a timely reinforcement of eight ships; and the darkness which at length separated him from his adversary found him in stubborn possession of the field, with two Dutch vessels as prizes.

In spite of Cromwell's efforts to prevent further hostilities, war now broke out in earnest. Blake made every arrangement in the Channel for cutting all the threads of Dutch outward and homeward bound trade, and hastened north to the Shetlands where the Dutch fishing season had just begun. He found two thousand small craft and a battle squadron of the sort which for years had driven Englishmen from English seas. He made short work of the combatant ships, rounded up the numberless herring-busses, compelled them to cast their harvest away, and sent them uninjured home. Tromp laboured in his wake without achieving anything; and, incurring the anger of his countrymen, was relieved of his command.

To replace him, the States General selected de With, a leader of equal valour, greater self-confidence, and inferior skill. Blake met him in a pitched battle at the Kentish Knock, a sandbank off the mouth of the Thames, and defeated him decisively in September, 1652.

The Dutch were still unwilling to believe that their vastly superior maritime power was jeopardized, and still less discredited. At the same time they acutely realized how dependent they were for the sinews of war upon their fisheries and merchandise, and how completely these lay at the mercy of a naval state as advantageously situated as England. They had lines of trade leading to the Mediterranean, to North America, to the West Indies, to South Africa, and to the Orient; but all of them were gathered into a single skein in the Channel, where their enemies were strongest. They therefore, resolved without delay to gather all the merchantmen, whom fear of disaster had kept at home, and send them through the Channel protected by a powerful battle-fleet, under Tromp, whom they summoned from retirement. Their intention was to make the most of the chilly months between October and March, when fleets according to the fashion of the time went into winter-quarters.

In December, 1652, Tromp was sighted from Margate steeple with no less than four hundred sail. Of these, one hundred were battleships and the remainder merchantmen. Many of the British men-of-war were scattered in distant harbours; but Blake, who had foreseen undue risk in such dispersion, was keeping watch in the Downs. He had no more than forty-two sail, but without a moment's hesitation he decided to attack. To the argument that never before or since did naval commander accept such odds, it has been urged that the greater part of the Dutch force consisted of merchantmen. But the English fleet was similarly composed! And therein lies much of the interest of the encounter.

Blake was too high-minded a man to contemplate suicide. As in all his battles, he had a brilliant plan which promised success. The Dutch were proceeding in three Indian files, moving parallel one to another, and with their leaders, Tromp, de Ruyter, and Evertsen leading each his own column. To Blake the enemy appeared like three monstrous snakes, and what he proposed to do was to concentrate his mobile force on the dangerous triple head, and destroying it, to leave the bodies to wriggle in brainless suicidal convolutions. All

three Dutch leaders afterwards bore witness to what they suffered at his hands; but, though the English ships near Blake fought as valiantly as he did, those remote from his influence drew out of the fight, and, turning tail, deserted him. Tromp with forces ten times as great as his opponent's, succeeded in taking two prizes, and these Blake endeavoured single-handed to rescue until his masts went by the board.

Whether or no we believe that, to celebrate his victory, Tromp hoisted a broom to his masthead in token that he swept the sea, it is clear enough that Blake did not question his own defeat. He at once offered to resign his command; and, when the contrite government offered to do what he willed, if only he would continue to serve, he made his own terms. The method of raising fleets, he explained, was in two ways detrimental to national interests. In the first place, the merchantmen were taken off their proper work, which was the carriage of cargo; and in the second place, they were matched (or might be matched) with vessels built only for war. Battle at sea was not what it had been in Elizabethan times, when the English alone had the secret of heavy naval ordnance. Both parties to the strife were similarly armed, and, choosing the range of duellists with pistols, pounded each other with cannon-balls. It was not fair, then, to expect reinforced merchantmen to stand up to Tromp himself; and, if they stood up to him, then beyond doubt or question they would never be of any further use for conveying cargo. The ships which had run away at the Ness had not been built for battle, and the moral of their conduct was plain for all to see. The Commonwealth must build sufficient battleships for the overthrow of the Dutch: and the Dutch had mobilized one hundred and fifty.

When Charles I. asked for money to build five battleships, his subjects insulted and defied him. When Blake asked for two hundred sail of the line, those who had made "Down with Ship Money!" their political watchword, collected the funds and built what he required. The one man spoke with the voice of kingship; the other with the voice of England.

The ships could only be created by slow degrees, and

Blake did not wait for them. In the spring of 1653 he waylaid Tromp on his homeward journey and brought him to battle. Tromp had nearly three hundred ships, and was certainly embarrassed by the fact that two hundred of them were packed with precious freight. Blake, with eighty sail, harried his enemies for three days, from Portland to Dover Strait. During this period he accounted for perhaps as many as sixty vessels, taken or sunk, and towards the close of the third day had driven the remainder of the enemy against the wall of Griz Nez, and planted himself to seaward with the wind west of north. Three more hours of fighting and Tromp's fleet would have suffered the fate of Rupert's ; but darkness fell rapidly and under its cover the distracted Dutch slipped away and escaped. None the less the English victory was the most momentous ever won in the Narrow Seas.

Blake was severely wounded during the battle ; and though refusing to take a holiday, handed over the fleet to General Monk who had come to sea as his understudy. The news of his sickness put the Dutch in good heart again, and in June they engaged Monk off the Gabbard, and held their own, until Blake, with a squadron refitting in the Thames, romped out and completed their discomfiture. After that, there was only one Dutchman who had any real stomach to continue the war, any real hope of reversing the verdict. In July, off Scheveningen, Tromp, dauntless as ever, fought his last brave fight, and the random bullet which laid him low ended the arrogant Dutch dominion over world-wide waterways.

Blake's labours, however, were not yet ended. For the second time he conducted a fleet into the unfriendly Mediterranean ; and on this occasion administered exemplary punishment to the Algerine pirates, who had always been a menace to the peaceful shipping of the world, and who during the Stewart epoch had carried their insulting depredations to unheard-of lengths in the Narrow Seas. The destruction of the navy of Algiers in its chosen stronghold of Porto Farina (1655) exalted the British flag in waters where it had hitherto been almost unknown ; and after receiving homage from many states, Blake left for home uttering, to men who could remember

Cadiz and Rhé, the prophecy that the name of England should be held by Mediterranean peoples in higher esteem than the names even of Greece and Rome.

Meanwhile the government at home had changed from a republic to an autocracy, and the Protector Cromwell, anxious to distract attention from the many grounds for uneasiness in domestic affairs, had resolved to interfere in the war then raging between France and Spain. With the latter power in particular England had many unsettled disputes, and in majestic manner, knowing the thunderbolts which were his to wield, Cromwell demanded of the Spaniards the very terms which should have been claimed in 1603. Receiving a haughty negative, he sent forth England's Admiral to do his worst ; and in April, 1657, Blake crowned his career by destroying the Spanish fleet in the harbour of Santa Cruz, in despite of every obstacle that the unfriendliness of the weather and the wit of man could provide to thwart his purpose.

From his last fight Blake returned to England very weary and very worn. There were no rewards answerable to what he had done, for his countrymen had abolished titles and honours. But it was rest only that he needed. His ship drew onward, made Plymouth, and opened the Sound, but as she did so the great sea-king's soul faltered on the threshold, and passed into a haven unvexed by human broils. Into ten short years he had compressed more of achievement than could with justice have been expected in a century, and the modesty with which he strove to cloak his deeds is fitly matched by the quiet sweetness of his death.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ROYAL NAVY

WHEN the republican epoch reached its close, and the King came to his own again, the feeling of the people towards the Navy differed in marked degree from the feeling of the people towards the Army. The victory of Naseby and the "crowning mercy" of Worcester, as Macaulay points out, were by at least half the nation remembered only with horror; but the victories of Blake stirred in every breast the same feeling of unmixed exaltation. The new government were rightly interpreting a universal feeling when they decided to do all in their power for the encouragement of the fleet.

The Restoration period may in consequence be described as the Golden Age of the Royal Navy, the era in which the standing maritime force took to itself very much the shape which it has worn ever since. Blake had shown the imperative need of discriminating between ships intended for war and ships intended for trade. The state ships, he had insisted, must be built for fighting purposes; must be designed and maintained as "battleships." This principle was now accepted by Charles II., who modified it only to the extent of giving the vessels of state less republican names, and extending to the entire fighting service the honourable designation of "Royal Navy." When we look back across the centuries we are apt to regard his *Royal Charles*, his *Happy Return* and *Speedwell* as belonging to the same category as the *Regent*, *Sovereign*, and *Great Harry* of a century earlier. But the parallel will

not hold. The Tudor vessels had been Crown property, and the maritime defence of the realm in those days had been the duty of the coastwise population only. Now the provision of a strong national fleet had been recognized as a duty affecting the entire country, and there was as little reason for calling the state ships "royal" as for calling Elizabeth's crown navy "national." And yet the use of the regal epithet in the reign of Charles II. had an appropriateness all its own; for under the sunny influence of royal favour and royal patronage the sea service was endowed at last with a corporate existence and an unmistakable identity which hitherto it had lacked.

Whatever may be said against them in other respects, the last two Stewart kings were beyond reproach in their devotion to the Navy. Charles II. more than any ruler of England since Henry VIII. was the true friend and well-wisher of the service he patronized; and his brother James not only filled with distinction the office of Lord High Admiral, not only commanded in chief at sea in two pitched battles, but found no small part of his pleasure in advancing the efficiency of England's first line of defence. Charles would preside in person at the Admiralty Board with the punctuality of a paid commissioner, and James coming off duty would hasten to the studio of Sir Peter Lely and watch that painter at work on a series of portraits of famous naval commanders intended for the royal palace. The needs of the service enlisted not merely the sympathy and interest of the Princes, but their active assistance and personal co-operation. One instance in particular may be cited and must stand for many similar. The science of navigation had been by English seamen advanced to a more perfect degree of accuracy than by the efforts of all other nations combined. But no satisfactory methods had as yet been found for determining longitude. The days of the marine chronometer were still far off, and the time machines of the moment were unreliable. At length to Charles, the patron of science, a scheme was unfolded for converting the face of the heavens into a clockface for mariners, with the constellations as index figures and the moon as moving hand.

The King consulted Isaac Newton, and winning his approval, persuaded Wren to build upon the mound in the royal gardens the famous octagonal room for Flamsteed's quadrants, which we know to-day as Greenwich Observatory.

More immediate was the advantage accruing to the navy from the steps taken by the Crown to provide the right kind of officers. Drake had shown in the sixteenth century what sort of education or school of discipline was needed, and Charles II. now ratified and confirmed what Drake had inaugurated. Youths of good birth and breeding were carefully selected, and sent to sea under royal patronage "to learn the ropes." Rated in turn as ordinary and able seamen, they were expected to serve two years afloat as Petty Officers before proceeding to the Tower of London, to be examined orally by a board on the duties of their profession. If they passed this examination, they then received a commission to act as Lieutenant, the only executive rank in the Navy below that of Captain. All Petty Officers at this date had some titular designation, and the "young gentlemen" who qualified for Petty Officers took the non-commissioned title of "Midshipmen." There was not as yet any proposal that the Corps of Officers, thus supplied to the navy, should take over the specialist duties inherited (with the ship of the line) from the older merchant service. The Master of one of his Majesty's ships, trained at Christ's Hospital and the Trinity House, was responsible for navigation; the Gunner, trained at the Artillery School at the Tower, was responsible for the ordnance on board and the exercise of the ship's company therein; the Purser, trained in some big business concern, took charge of all stores and account books; and the Boatswain, who answered to the engine-room staff of a later day, was responsible for the motion of the ship and the ground tackle that brought her to a standstill. These functionaries enjoyed high status under warrants issued by the Crown, but though the first two, on the death in action of both Captain and Lieutenant, occasionally took command of a ship, they did not, like the specialists of to-day, enjoy opportunities of promotion to higher command.

For the governance of his Royal Navy, Charles II. issued a legal code, acting herein upon the example set by Blake after the battle of the Ness. These "Articles of War," as they were called, were devised for the admonishment of evil-doers and for the punishment of those who were guilty of drunkenness, insubordination, cowardice, and other misdemeanours. They enabled a commander-in-chief to act, while afloat, as the King's vice-regent, and to summon a court-martial for the trial of all offences. They are remembered in their older form by the grand words of their preamble, "It is upon the Navy under the good Providence of God that the safety, honour, and welfare of this Realm do chiefly depend."

Another leaf that Charles II. took out of Blake's book of wisdom had reference to the conduct of battle at sea. The Fighting Instructions, as these maxims of tactical foresight were called, were issued with the excellent design of saving the higher command at sea from learning all their lessons in the hard school of experience. They summarized pithily what had been found useful in the past, and what seemed applicable to the future.

The officers of the higher command, for whom these handbooks were prepared, received in the dispensation of naval favours a new title and an accession of dignity. Francis Drake, in charge of a national enterprise, had been dubbed "General," and the like rank had, in conformity with custom, been bestowed on Robert Blake; but now the leaders of a fleet and of its squadrons and sub-divisions were to be known as "Admirals," to show that they belonged to a service as distinct from the Army, as from the Law or from the Church. At the head of the whole hierarchy, and succeeding to the position once filled by Howard of Effingham, was the King's brother, the Duke of York, styled "Lord High Admiral."

Every Admiral was henceforth entitled to carry at sea a banner indicative of his rank, and it is to this date that we must ascribe the first systematic scheme for putting the Navy into uniform. Not that there was any standardized wearing

apparel, either for officers or men,[1] but at sea the unit is not the man, but the ship. And the ship henceforth was to be invested with three standard articles of apparel. On a little staff at the bowsprit end she was to fly the Union Flag, not so much to show her nationality as to indicate that she belonged to the King's own fighting navy, and not to the merchant service. On a greater staff which leaned over the taffrail she was to fly an Ensign, or Index, to show to which squadron of the fleet she belonged: white, if her place was in the vanguard; red, if her place was in the centre; blue, if her place was in the rear. Lastly, at her masthead she was to wear either a narrow pendant, if she was a "private" ship, or a "flag" if she had the honour of carrying an Admiral. The Admirals, or Flag Officers, took order of precedence from the squadron in which they served. The Admiral of the Red stood highest on the list, because the centre of the line was deemed the proper station for the Commander-in-chief. Vice-Admirals of the Red took precedence of all other Vice-Admirals, and Rear Admirals of the Red over all other Rear Admirals. The head of the line (or vanguard) was considered a more honourable place than the rear, because likely to be in action first. For that reason flag officers of the White Squadron ranked more highly than officers of similar rank in the Blue. In every ship all three pieces of apparel were consistent and yet dissimilar: the "Union Flag" at the bowsprit end was repeated in the upper canton of the Ensign; and the colour of the fly (or groundwork) of the Ensign was reflected in the streamer of a Captain's narrow pendant or the montone of an Admiral's flag.

The details of uniform are to the uninitiated apt to be mysterious, and the creation in our own day of submersible ships and vessels without masts has made much of the foregoing terminology either obsolete or incomprehensible. But the enumeration will have justified itself if it symbolizes for us the new status given to the sea service at the restoration of monarchy. The Royal Navy was not merely distinct now

[1] The earliest uniform for officers was not introduced until 1748, and for men not until after the battle of Trafalgar.

from the wider service, out of which it had grown: it was become a close corporation, a community apart; a profession with its own manners, customs, and laws; almost, it might be said, with its own language. The great sailors of the Elizabethan age, as we see them in the pages of Hakluyt, differ hardly at all from eminent men in other walks of life. John Hawkins, a bit of a dandy in his way, was once mistaken in London streets for the immaculate Sir Christopher Hatton. But the sailors, whose acquaintance we make in the pages of the Restoration dramatists, are, to say the least of it, redolent of tar and oakum. Ben Legend, Captain Manly, Flip, Worthy, and Mizzen are as unmistakable as the Chancellor in his robes or a bishop in his shovel hat.

It would have been strange if the navy, basking in the unwonted sunshine of royal favour, had lacked at this time a pen to point the moral for posterity. Such a one was Samuel Pepys, who did not indeed write his projected history of the service with which he was so long connected, but left us in his documents a legacy of secrets more generous and more intimate than any formal compilation could disclose.

Born in 1633, he was educated at Magdalene College, Cambridge, where his books and papers are still preserved, and in 1660 had the good fortune to attend his kinsman, Edward Montagu, on the naval mission which resulted in the restoration of Charles II. For his services on this occasion Admiral Montagu was created Earl of Sandwich, and finding Pepys a most excellent secretary, persuaded the King and the Lord High Admiral to instal him as Clerk of the Acts. As such Pepys was virtual controller of the commission organized by Henry VIII. for the provision and maintenance of naval equipment. In 1673 he was promoted from the Navy Office to be secretary to the Lord High Admiral, and his fifteen thousand surviving letters attest the industry with which he worked. He showed through all his long term of office a high personal standard of duty, an admirable sense of tact, with unfailing sobriety and soundness of judgment. He allowed no slackness in his subordinates and spared himself no pains. He was, in the words of General Monk, now Duke of Albemarle,

"the right hand of the navy." The famous *Diary*, by which he is best known, was discarded nearly five years before he went to the Admiralty, where he presided (with but one interval) from 1673 to 1688. This fact should be borne in mind by those who are tempted to believe that the frivolity which the diarist betrayed at the age of twenty-seven, and which was characteristic of the Restoration era, still clung to him when he controlled (to the admiration of all men) one of the highest offices of the State.

For it must not be thought that in naval affairs the government of Charles II. concerned itself only with the glitter of gold lace. The policy of the Commonwealth, as it affected the material prosperity of the land, was reasserted now in a manner even more demonstrative. The Navigation Act of 1651 was eclipsed by the Navigation Act of 1660, and the views of the London merchants and of traders generally were given the most careful audience. The First Dutch War (1652-4) had proved conclusively that, so long as all Dutch trade routes led through the English Channel, the States General could not monopolize the commerce of the world. But it had not unfastened the Dutch grip upon the sources of commercial wealth. At the close of the war the Dutch had paid heavy reparations for injuries in the past; and having done so, turned with avidity to the congenial task of harvesting the future. Against the Dutch state-organized commerce private English companies had not hitherto been able to compete, and they turned now to the Crown for succour. Charles II. was instant in his response. British firms, till now unpatronized, became Chartered Companies, and went forth conquering and to conquer. If the Dutch spheres of influence had been less world-wide in their range, the rivalry of England might have appeared less aggressive. But it was impossible for English trade to increase unless Dutch trade diminished, and the pushfulness of British commercial enterprise, backed by Crown patronage and naval prestige, assumed in Dutch eyes the appearance of provocative trespass. By his marriage with Catherine of Portugal, Charles II. acquired Bombay. This gave Englishmen an island in East Indian

seas and an entrepôt, eminently unwelcome to the state which had turned them out of Amboyna.[1] And if in Indian seas a conflict was probable, on the coast of North America a collision was inevitable, for, from their coign of vantage at New Amsterdam, the Dutch controlled the whole littoral of a continent which in theory belonged to their rivals. When therefore the English captured New Amsterdam, and in honour of the Lord High Admiral rechristened it New York, war could no longer be delayed.

The first pitched battle of the Second Dutch War was fought off Lowestoft in 1665. The Dutch, under the command of Opdam, were opposed by an English fleet under the Duke of York, Prince Rupert, and Pepys's patron, the Earl of Sandwich. Both sides had over one hundred ships, and the long parallel lines must have stretched across the sea to a length of fourteen miles. An appalling accident, quite inexplicable, destroyed Opdam's flagship in the midst of the battle, and so demoralized the Dutch as to ruin their chances of success. But their defeat was converted into a rout when Sandwich, with the Blue Squadron, broke through the middle of their line. It was thought at the time that a more vigorous pursuit on the Duke's part might have ended the war at a single blow. As it was, the majority of Opdam's ships reached home under cover of darkness.

In the autumn the ravages of the Plague kept the fleet in the Thames, and the Dutch, now under the command of de Ruyter, prepared, with new heart, to reverse the verdict. In 1666 the war was renewed, and in the belief that a French force was coming to the assistance of Holland, the English unhappily divided their fleet. One squadron, under Prince Rupert, went in search of the French, and the other, under the Duke of Albemarle, took charge of the North Sea. Here in the first week of June was fought the "Four Days' Battle," one of the most tremendous in which a British fleet ever

[1] Charles also received Tangier, which for the time being gave England an effective naval control over the Mediterranean. Unhappily this ideal base was abandoned before the close of the reign from motives of economy.

engaged. On the first day Albemarle, numerically inferior, massed superior force on a part of de Ruyter's line, and looked like winning. The Dutch exposed wing, which Albemarle attacked, was saved by the shallows, and reinforcements were hurried up to the side that needed them least. On the second day Albemarle again made for himself a grand tactical opening, and had the best of things, but the effort exhausted his strength, and on the third day he proceeded to withdraw his forces from the field in a manner which extorted de Ruyter's admiration. Towards evening Prince Rupert was sighted, and on the fourth day Albemarle renewed the fight. He was, perhaps, asking of his stricken fleet more than could be expected; and yet, when the fourth night sank upon the sea, it was the Dutch who had departed and the English who stayed. Hitching up his breeches, as was his wont, the old Duke cursed the departing Hollanders for a lack of stamina which had baulked him of his prey.

As many British ships were lost and many British lives, the battle was bemoaned in London as a terrible British defeat. Albemarle himself would not have raised any protest against such a verdict. Within two months he had another fleet ready, and at the battle of St. James's Day inflicted upon de Ruyter the most crushing defeat in the whole history of these keenly contested wars.

Taken in conjunction with the holocaust of Dutch merchandise which followed, this victory should have brought swift peace behind it. But the glory was soon tarnished, the fame forgotten. The glitter of royal patronage and the splendour of success at sea serves in the memory of the race but to emphasize in the Restoration Navy the gloom of bankruptcy, shame, and ruin.

Nations, like individuals, are more apt to pursue with relentless vengeance some hastily selected scapegoat, than to feel in their collective conscience any remorse for national shortcomings. There was insufficient money in Charles II.'s day for the maintenance and equipment of the fleet, and posterity has saddled Charles with the blame. The Merry Monarch, with his extravagances and his parasites, has been con-

trasted unamiably with the upright Oliver and his impeccable administration. A comparison should certainly be made, but with judgment and justice. In Oliver's day any latent desire of the people for republicanism was given full scope; in Oliver's day nonconformity, with all that the word implies, found its fullest expression; in Oliver's day, to be brief, minorities were able to make their voice prevail, and majorities were shorn of their truculence. But in Oliver's day, and in Oliver's day alone, more than half the annual revenue was devoted to naval expenditure. Nor did that suffice. When Oliver died he bequeathed to his successor naval debts amounting to what in those days was the colossal figure of £1,250,000. And these debts Charles II. could not afford to repudiate.[1]

The method of funding loans, so familiar in our own days, had not been originated, and at the bidding of his people the new King challenged the trade supremacy of the Dutch. The burden of expenditure soon became a breaking one, and the crisis needed a great national effort, such as had been made during the Commonwealth and Protectorate. That effort, however, had not been spontaneous; it had been stimulated by martial law and exacted at the point of Oliver's sword. With the Restoration had come a sigh of relief, and the people, closing their eyes to Navy needs, spent their money with contentment on themselves.

The sea administrators honestly tried to make the money, granted by Parliament, go as far as it would. Like domestic economists, in a similar predicament, they used their hard cash for urgent claims and gave bills or promissory notes for what could be deferred. They were led to their gravest speculation of this kind by a perfectly natural process. According to an ancient custom, and a very bad custom it was, the personnel of the fleet did not receive advances of pay once a month, but a cheque to settle the State's obligation at the close of a ship's commission. The cheque, or "ticket" (as it was called), could be presented only at the Navy Pay Office in London; and ships and fleets, as they brought their commissions to a close, discharged legions of men demanding that their

[1] He succeeded, however, in reducing them to £172,000.

A CAPTURED BRITISH BATTLESHIP.

From the etching by Renier Nooms, nicknamed "Zeeman," 1623-68.

" paper " should be converted into the currency of the realm. The seamen, it must be remembered, ceased to be naval ratings as soon as they left their ship, and therefore, without the loss of an hour, they presented at the Ticket Office their title to three or four years' hard-earned pay. But the Ticket Office had no reserve of precious metal, and, being virtually bankrupt, dishonoured the cheques.

None can feel astonishment if the lower deck made war against their countrymen who treated them so scurvily. They could not strike or mutiny, because their visit to the Ticket Office automatically severed their connexion with the service. They demonstrated in London streets, and then went over to the Dutch.

In June, 1667, de Ruyter, guided by British seamen, penetrated the labyrinth of the Thames, picked his way daintily between its greedy shoals, silenced the guns of Sheerness, turned into the Medway, and attacked the fleet at Chatham. Every effort was made to stop him, but he burnt the *Royal James*, *Royal Oak*, and *Loyal London*, and carried off to Holland the proudest vessel in England—the *Royal Charles*, the flagship which had carried Blake and Albemarle to victory: the *Royal Charles*, the very symbol of Monarchy Restored.

This tragedy may well be called the most shameful incident in the history of the fleet. But that is not all. It was a foul blot upon the honour of England, a blot which time has not been able to efface. The nation had transferred the financial burden of sea-power from its own shoulders to the shoulders of those who had fought its battles; and neither Albemarle nor Pepys could keep de Ruyter out of the Thames when British sailors brought him in.

CHAPTER IX

THE RHINE DELTA

IT has been shown on a previous page[1] that the British Isles are believed to have been at one time part of the Continent, and that the present separation is more apparent than real. The Thames, we have seen, was at one time a tributary of the Rhine, and at this present hour, in a political sense, something of that relationship continues. It is as impossible to dissociate the two rivers as to dissociate mother and child, and Britons who ignore the parent stream are not likely to prove good patriots. The Rhine, with its mighty tributaries, and with the confluents which meet and mingle with it, has done as much to mould the foreign policy of this country as it has done to shape its physical environment. The immense area which we call the basin of the Rhine is capable of raising and sustaining a population comparable with that of the world's mightiest rivers; and across the Delta of the Rhine, checking, like a weir, the seaward drift of many peoples, stretch the British Isles.

In mediaeval times there was no conscious menace to this country, for roads were few, communications were poor, and the Rhine basin in consequence was subdivided into many small principalities, which felt no promptings towards union. But this condition of things was radically changed when the Renaissance overset the old world system, and great modern states began to emerge. In the sixteenth century the Rhine-

[1] Above, p. 19.

land, and more particularly the Rhine delta, assumed its true importance. Its wonderful cities, famous for their wealth, their culture, their luxury, and their devotion to the fine arts, lost the independence which they had once enjoyed, and were drawn like fish into a great political net, the world-wide empire of Spain. So long as the Count of Flanders wrestled with the Duke of Brabant, so long as Holland vied with Zealand, and Bruges with Ghent, England could hold her own. But it was different when the Rhine delta learnt to think imperially. Then the Thames began to shrink in a political sense, and the vast river-system over against it assumed its native pre-eminence. In the tangled waterways of the delta there were many excellent havens, but one in particular surpassed its rivals. In the sixteenth century Antwerp enjoyed a prestige so remarkable that the rest of the Netherlands might be described as its suburbs. Its markets were the greatest in the world. In the docks and in the river the astonished visitor might count in one day as many as two thousand five hundred ships, and under the graceful galleries of the Exchange were heard more tongues than round the tower of Babel.

Nothing could have been more natural than that England should attach herself to the unhappy people of the Netherlands when the intolerance of Philip II. goaded them into revolt. But though Elizabeth throughout her reign was nervously sensible of the menace to her throne from a Castilianized Rhine delta, it was sympathy with the sufferings of Alva's victims and not national self-interest that drew her into the Low Country wars. To depress the power of Spain was England's prime need; to stand up to a brutal bully was her disinterested resolve. William the Silent, before he fell by the assassin's hand, delivered the provinces north of the Rhine; but in 1585, after unparalleled exertions, the Duke of Parma recovered Antwerp for Spain.

We have already seen that, when England in 1603 deserted them, the Dutch continued their struggle alone. Those who have followed their mercantile system through the preceding pages will hardly need to be told that "Delenda est

Antwerp ! " was their unforgiving battle-cry. They could not reverse the decrees of nature, they could not disendow what the earth had favoured, they could not dry up the Scheldt. But they abated not their energies until they had isolated and insulated the famous city, until they had possessed themselves of the river banks, the water and land approaches, and the outlet to the sea. When the general pacification of 1648 ended the long struggle with Spain, Antwerp, which might under happier stars have been the first harbour in the world, was reduced by the consent of the signatory powers to the status of an inland town. The Dutch had no haven in the northern half of the delta comparable to the port which they had artificially sealed ; but they selected their rival sites with judgment, and developed Amsterdam and Rotterdam until those cities eclipsed the wealth once centred in Flanders and Brabant.

The modern mind, perhaps, will wonder why the Dutch in the days of their greatest strength paid so much attention to the destruction of Antwerp, and so little to the destruction of London. The reason of course is that Antwerp challenged them, and London did not. In early Stewart times London, as a port, was negligible. It was not till the days of Blake that the Dutch began to realize that if the owners of the Scheldt can master Antwerp, the owners of the English Channel can master the Scheldt. At any time after the collision off Dover it would have paid them to come to an understanding with the Commonwealth, and to have made an amicable division of commerce the basis of a good understanding. But their pride kept reasserting itself, and concessions were postponed until too late.

When the first Anglo-Dutch war ended, they turned again to their old thoughts of monopoly, embittering English feeling against them instead of placating a competitor whom they had failed to subdue. So came the Second War, with fresh humiliations ; and then the tide suddenly turned, and they entered the Thames as masterfully as they had entered the once proud Scheldt.

It was a dramatic moment : the fate of nations hung in the balance.

What would have happened if Holland and England had been allowed to settle their differences, nobody now can say. But, like the earthquake which in classic days separated two armies, an amazing political cataclysm now suddenly ended the Second Dutch War. The two maritime powers loosed their grip, fell apart, and directed their gaze with simultaneous solicitude to the fate overhanging Antwerp.

For half a century France had been growing in strength, and developing plans and ambitions. She had fought beside Holland against the Spanish Empire, and now her military power was greater than that of Spain. The Dutch had not suspected her, for her aims were other than mercantile and did not conflict with their own. Indeed, in the year preceding their incursion into the Medway they had looked for French assistance, and had been encouraged to do so by a message from Paris. But the new ruler of France, King Louis XIV., had far-reaching schemes which were destined to end abruptly the Franco-Dutch alliance. His dream of pushing the boundaries of modern France to the limits of ancient Gaul meant the extension of French territory to the banks of the Rhine, and in consequence the absorption into his kingdom of the southern half of the delta. Territorial aggrandisement was with Louis the principal motive, but the conquest of the Spanish Netherlands would, he hoped, give him greater pre-eminence in the north of Europe than the development of Toulon had already given him in the south. France had always been handicapped by the lack of good harbours along her northern coast. Antwerp promised to endow him with more than any emperor or sultan had ever enjoyed at Constantinople.

Louis did not disguise from himself that his northward extension would rupture his friendship with the Dutch, and possibly provoke them to declare war. In the latter event he felt no anxiety except for his seaborne interests, and these he confided to the care of a minister excellently fitted for the task. Colbert may be said to have created, if not the French navy, then most certainly French sea-power. Had he succeeded to Cardinal Mazarin's power as well as to Cardinal Mazarin's place, there is little doubt that he would have

developed a system of world-commerce and encouraged colonial expansion. As it was, he did for France much of what Henry VII. a century and a half earlier had done for England. He consciously adopted a maritime policy as a stimulus to national greatness. When, therefore, Louis was ready to strike, he had a royal navy which, even in Dutch and English estimation, was worthy of their steel.

If we remember that Louis' army was now the best in the world, and Antwerp easily assailable by land, then admittedly his coup was well-timed. The two maritime powers alone could affect the fate of Antwerp, and the two maritime powers were locked in a death struggle. In the year of the Chatham raid Louis set his invincible armies in motion, and incorporated the Spanish Netherlands in the realm of France.

Thus were the English delivered from their Dutch invaders! But that mattered little in comparison with the greater menace which had intervened. The occupation by the French of so vital a part of the Rhine delta revived the peril of the sixteenth century, when the hosts of Parma prepared at Antwerp for the overthrow of Elizabeth. Indeed, the threat was more dreadful, seeing that, in Spanish days, France had interposed a neutral mass between Antwerp and the capital to which it was obedient. Antwerp, it was true, had been reduced by the Dutch to the status of an inland town; but that condition, upon which the continuance of Dutch prosperity depended, had been wrested with infinite difficulty from Spain when the Dutch had been in partnership with France. The Dutch cherished no illusions as to their faculty for keeping Antwerp sealed, if a state such as France resolved to open it. Clearly the interests of Holland and England were one, and in 1668 the two belligerents made up their quarrel, and faced the new danger side by side. Enlisting the sympathies of Sweden, the only power at that date which in a military sense could compete with France, they hurled at Louis an ultimatum, which compelled that disappointed potentate to evacuate the Delta.

The fury and disappointment of Louis knew no bounds, and he set himself at once to recover by diplomacy what diplomacy

had taken from him. He detached Sweden from the opposite camp to his own, and then laid his snare for England. In the second Dutch War Charles had been rendered powerless by his penury. Louis offered his brother king hundreds of thousands in solid gold, and the bait was too alluring. By the Secret Treaty of Dover, in 1670, Charles virtually hired out the Royal Navy to his taskmaster, who proceeded to complete his arrangements for the invasion and subjugation of Holland. By money he opened through Germany an easy road to Amsterdam, and gave his conjoint maritime forces the signal to sweep the seas.

The Third Dutch War, as ensuing operations were called in this country, opened in 1672 with the junction of the French and English fleets at Portsmouth. Here they were inspected by Charles in person, and afterwards proceeded into the North Sea, de Ruyter withdrawing in apparent haste before them. They were beyond doubt formidable, though the manning of the English squadron—even after the influx of French money—proved exceedingly difficult. To make up their complements the allies proceeded to Solebay on the coast of Suffolk, and lay at anchor debating their plan of campaign. Once more the Duke of York held supreme command, with the Comte d'Estrées as second and Lord Sandwich as third in command. The last-named admiral urged in council of war that undue delay in an open roadstead was courting disaster. Unhappily, his warning fell on deaf ears, and de Ruyter delivered a sudden attack, using to good effect an easterly wind. The allies straggled in some disorder out to sea, Sandwich leading northward and the Duke following him. But the French, instead of following the Duke, as their station and common-sense directed, led southward on the opposite tack, so that every yard of seaway drew them further from their friends. De Ruyter, who was distinctly inferior in strength to the English and French in combination, was swift to see his opportunity and swift to make the most of it. He ignored the French altogether and massed his force on the English only. He had the advantage of position and the advantage of the wind, and, money being

no object, he expended fireships with reckless prodigality. The English were still slightly superior in numbers, but this advantage was neutralized by their want of preparation. They suffered grievously in consequence, but, with their backs to the wall, fought with desperate valour. The Duke of York set a magnificent example, and the Earl of Sandwich fought with matchless intrepidity. Ill fortune drove a small Dutch ship athwart his hawse, and wedged it under his bowsprit. He was, in consequence, brought to a dead stop, and made a stationary target for fireships. Again and again he drove them off, but at last his glorious *Royal James* caught fire, and blazed from stem to stern. The ships that were nearest gave her a wide berth, and waited for an explosion which would split the sky. But the great flagship burnt slowly to the waterline, having used every grain of powder she possessed. The Earl, with a devoted young officer on either side, stood on the quarter-deck till the flames grew too hot for human endurance. It is then supposed that the three cast themselves overboard. The Earl's body was subsequently recovered and buried in Westminster Abbey.

Towards evening the French approached the scene of action, whereat de Ruyter drew off. Never was more memorable action at sea; never did the British fight more gamely. But the death of Pepys's patron almost justified de Ruyter in claiming a victory for the Dutch.

In the following year the French ships took station between the two British squadrons. But this was rather ignominious, and after two indecisive skirmishes with de Ruyter, they were restored to the post of honour in the van. In August, 1673, off the Texel, the last battle of the protracted Dutch Wars was fought. Awaiting an easterly wind to help him, de Ruyter, with some temerity, tried the ruse which had told in his favour at Solebay. He ignored the French and concentrated his forces on the English centre and rear. The French on this occasion sailed on the same tack as their allies and formed an integral part of a closely knit line. It was open to them to devise a winning gambit, while the British contrived to hold the entire weight of the enemy's attack.

But they sailed on serenely out of the picture, as if their presence on the battlefield had been a mere coincidence. Prince Rupert, the allied commander-in-chief, had in consequence some difficulty in extricating his ships from disaster.

Such campaigning obviously could not continue. The people of England did not know of Charles's secret compact with Louis; but the sailors, with shrewd intuition, declared that the French only accompanied them as far as the battlefield "to see if the British Navy earned its pay"; and this verdict was universally accepted. In 1674 England withdrew from the war altogether, and her gallant battleships ceased to act as mercenaries.

The set-backs at Solebay and the Texel cannot be regarded by Englishmen to-day otherwise than as merciful dispensations. England had been glad at the outset to fight once more against Holland, if only to avenge the Chatham raid. But as the months went by, she began to see that she had taken the wrong side. Her sympathies, as in the days of the Spanish wars, drew her in the direction of her truest interests. Holland, in struggling to keep France out of the Rhine delta, was standing up, as she had done in her most heroic days, against aggressive militarism. England, always confused in the mazes of foreign politics, found it easy to applaud the valour of her rivals for sea-power, as she saw them turn from their maritime interests and wade ashore through the dykes they had cut to serve against the legions of France. Other states had already offered their friendship to William III., the dauntless leader of the Dutch troops, when in 1677 that Prince received in marriage the hand of Charles's niece, the English Princess Mary. In the following year Louis consented to peace, and the delta of the Rhine was saved.

The date coincides with Pepys's fifth year at the Admiralty, and indicates the high-water mark of the Restoration navy.

The Antwerp problem, if so it may be called, was now allowed to sleep for ten years. But it was in 1688 resuscitated by the domestic troubles of the unhappy James II. The victor of Lowestoft, the hero of Solebay, had an unhappy knack of alienating his friends and supporters, of offending

every class and community in the state. He might have done so and still retained his crown, if only he had kept the affection of his fleet; for the navy was strong and well looked after, and Samuel Pepys was at the zenith of his knowledge and experience. But James's political experiments lost him the loyalty even of the service for which he felt the most genuine regard. One British naval officer after another put his sword at the disposal of the Prince of Orange, to whom the revolutionary party in England were looking for deliverance. Some ships still remained outwardly loyal and gathered round Lord Dartmouth for the defence of the realm; but inwardly they were seething with disaffection, and unlikely to join battle with their countrymen who had gone over to the champion of the Protestant faith. Like so much else in British history, the Bloodless Revolution of 1688 was based on British battleships, which carried William III. in safety to Torbay and put him ashore with their benediction.

Deserted by the fleet, for whose efficiency he was so largely responsible, James fled to Versailles and craved French assistance for the recovery of his throne. Louis XIV. immediately championed his cause, not out of any love or sympathy for the fugitive, but out of hatred for the Dutch, who had thwarted his schemes. William of Holland had usurped the throne of James, and by adopting James's cause, Louis had a genuine reason for renewing the war against the accredited defender of the delta of the Rhine. William, on his part, was actuated in his acceptance of his father-in-law's crown by a desire to combine against Louis the two chief states which would suffer by the French capture of Antwerp and the opening of the Scheldt.

With the British Isles solid behind him, William in the war of the English Succession might have achieved an instant measure of success. But Scotland and Ireland both declared for James, and, in so doing, strengthened Louis' hands. The Irish war in particular distracted William's attention from the defence of Antwerp. James accompanied the French army across the sea, and a naval battle near Bantry Bay introduced the British fleet to a novel type of fighting. The

French, instead of standing to their guns like the Dutch, conceived their honour was satisfied, when they had covered their disembarkation, and broke off the action when it had scarcely begun. They then claimed a victory, and were at least entitled to say that they had achieved the primary object which they had in view. William, with not less subtlety, created Admiral Herbert, the British Commander-in-chief, Earl of Torrington, thereby to show the sailors of his adopted country how fully he sympathized with them in their inability to chastise an enemy who vacated the field.

In the next year he accepted the supreme hazard of crossing in person to Ireland, so as to end the war on the western front before pushing things to a decision on the east. How supreme this hazard was is not generally understood, for the campaign, which culminated in the battle of the Boyne, is usually studied as if the only water concerned was the river which the victors crossed. The battle of Beachy Head, however, was fought within a few hours of the Boyne, and the fact that Macaulay has drawn a magnificent picture of the land fight and the most ludicrous caricature of the sea fight should not be allowed to obscure the dependence of the one upon the other.

The campaign of Bantry Bay had been sufficient to convince Louis XIV. that, in a war with England, he could not wisely maintain an Atlantic fleet at Brest and a Mediterranean fleet at Toulon. For any reasonable hope of success at sea the concentration of his fleets was a first essential, and this concentration he resolved to effect in the year 1690. The British Admiralty, learning his intention, and having their hands very full already, determined to seize the Strait of Gibraltar and keep the Toulon fleet where it was. They therefore detached for this purpose a fleet under Admiral Killigrew, testifying thereby to their own disquietude and the correctness of Louis' judgment. Meanwhile they had to cover the Irish operations, for William was preparing to cross St. George's Channel. If they could have heard that Killigrew had established the blockade of Toulon, or decisively defeated the French Mediterranean fleet, their anxiety would have been allayed. Lacking that intelligence, they mobilized

a second strong fleet under Sir Clowdisley [1] Shovel to convey his Majesty in safety to Ireland. Their dispositions guaranteed the success of William's enterprise, but denuded the realm of England itself of a goodly proportion of the first line of defence.

The Channel Fleet, under Lord Torrington, was reduced in fact to about thirty sail, and even when it had received a lusty Dutch contingent could muster little more than fifty ships. This force would have been ample if Killigrew had succeeded; but Killigrew unhappily missed his mark, and the combined French fleets from Brest and Toulon entered the Channel over seventy strong.

The government in London, robbed of William's serene judgment, allowed panic to infect its counsels, and eventually sent Torrington positive orders to seek the invaders and hack them in pieces.

These orders conflicted with Torrington's better judgment. He knew that both Shovel and Killigrew would hasten to his assistance, and he proposed by dilatory tactics to perplex his opponents and postpone action until succours reached him. He intended (in his own immortal phrase) "to keep his *fleet in being*."

Even the unwise decision of the Council to dictate what he should do did not shake his discretion. He planned his attack to hurt the French without enabling them to use their numbers. With this in view he clung to the wind, and arranged to attack the tail of the enemy's fleet with his rearward squadron alone. Unhappily, either through inadequate staff work or the natural misunderstandings inseparable from the use of a strange tongue, the Dutch failed to appreciate the part allotted to them, and when Torrington broke the signal to attack, they plunged down upon the head of the French line and engaged it at close quarters. The shape of the allied formation then became that of a bow well bent, each tip or horn being hotly in action, and the centre convexing away from the foe. If Torrington's orders had been obeyed, the French could only have reinforced the part assailed by turning their whole line

[1] So the admiral himself always spelt his name.

about. But the folly of the Dutch gave the Comte de Tourville full scope. He had already twenty vessels more than the allies, and Torrington's non-committal policy left him at liberty to use them as he would. With exemplary skill he pushed them up eagerly to complete the discomfiture of the allied van. The Dutch, in theory, should have been annihilated. In practice they were saved by a neat, seaman-like ruse. The tide, Torrington noted, was already ebbing fast, and, in answer to a signal, the Dutch anchored with all sail set, and saw the battlefield glide from under their keels and fade away to leeward. Torrington withdrew his own force in good order, covered the stricken Dutch ships with his own, sank such as seemed irreparable, and retired into the Thames to recondition his fleet.

He was immediately seized by the King's orders, subjected to ignominious constraint, imprisoned as a malefactor, tried by court-martial, and, to the amazement of an unenlightened public, unanimously acquitted by his brother officers.

Whereupon William III. himself intervened, cancelled the findings of the court-martial, and dismissed the Admiral from the service of his country.

Such was the fate of one whose profession is little understood, but freely criticized.

The French, for their part, had no desire to deliver in battle a knock-out blow, but only to pave the way to some more intelligible operation. The fact that they made nothing of the campaign of 1690 robs them of any real right to call Beachy Head a victory. They might have done something if they had beaten Torrington, but, even then, there were the fleets of Shovel and Killigrew to hamper their proceedings.

The outstanding victory of 1690 was the victory of the Boyne, and the victory of the Boyne could never have been won but for the naval power which the conqueror abased.

The failure of James II. in Ireland sent that exiled monarch back to France. Here in 1692 a more ambitious scheme was set afoot to land in England and trust to the promises of many influential statesmen who were already tiring of their Dutch supplanters. The enterprise of course necessitated the use of

French soldiers, French sailors, French ships, and French gold. But James lacked the discernment, which would have warned wiser men, that such means would rally Englishmen against him.

In May, 1692, de Tourville's armada, upon which the hopes of the enterprise depended, was discovered by an Anglo-Dutch force near Cape Barfleur. Admiral Russell, the allied leader on this occasion, had the good fortune to command a fleet more than twice as numerous as his opponent's, and after a fine display of skill and valour on both sides, the British scattered the French ships to the four winds of heaven. The weight of his numbers would in any case have discounted Russell's victory, and many blamed him for his failure to make prizes on the battlefield. But this defect, if such it was, found a remedy only a few days later; for Delaval, who had attacked the French tail at Beachy Head, destroyed Tourville's flagship, the *Soleil Royal*, and two other splendid French battleships at Cherbourg; and Sir George Rooke crowned the glories of the campaign by destroying, within sight of King James and his would-be army of invasion, no less than twelve French battleships in the fortified harbour of La Hogue.

Such sweeping victories gave England the command of the sea, and allowed her to take, of the war then raging, as much or as little as she would.

Looking back across the centuries, the observer of to-day may well wonder whether there was much to choose between James, who ruled in the interest of his co-religionists, and William, who ruled with the assistance of his Dutch fellow-countrymen. But if the domestic mistakes of James II. be set off against the domestic mistakes of his successor, the foreign policy of the two cannot so be treated. James stood or fell with Louis XIV., and the success of Louis XIV. meant the absorption into the French domain of Antwerp and the Rhine delta. The English people are slow to understand the conflicting policies of the Continent, even when such policies affected them most nearly. It needed a Dutch King of England to teach us where our interests lay, for the fortunes of Holland

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THE RHINE DELTA

and the fortunes of England during the age of Louis the Great were one.

This, then, is the importance of the great naval victories of Barfleur and La Hogue. They saved the Rhine delta from French dominion; they saved William's cities of Amsterdam and London from being eclipsed by a French-controlled Antwerp.

If William and Mary had been unjust to the navy before and after Beachy Head, they were at pains after Barfleur and La Hogue to make right royal amends. To celebrate the glories of these great sea fights they presented to the sailors their own palace of Greenwich, the favourite home of the British sovereigns during the sixteenth century, and the birthplace of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth. The palace had fallen into disrepair during the great Civil War, and had been rebuilt only in part at the Restoration. Sir Christopher Wren now munificently gave his incomparable services, and beside the building in which Charles II. and Pepys had worked for the good of the fleet, rose two lofty domes and imposing colonnades to grace a noble residence, designed for the Crown, and completed as a retreat for those who had given it the empire of the seas.

CHAPTER X

THE NAVAL BASE

THE Treaty of Ryswick, which concluded the War of the English Succession, provided no permanent peace, but merely a breathing space. The King of Spain in 1700 died without issue, and by his last will and testament bequeathed his vast empire to his relative, Louis XIV.'s grandson. By this sudden turn of fortune's wheel the apple of discord—Antwerp—dropped into the lap of the French royal family, if not actually into the hands of France. Thus Holland and England were cheated of what they had so long contended for, and William III., upon his deathbed, may well have thought that his lifework was overset. Indeed, if the King of France had observed the amenities of international intercourse, it would have been difficult to prevent the Spanish bequest from being executed to the letter. But good luck made Louis, like a gambler, reckless of consequence; and England and her allies seized his first breach of the Treaty of Ryswick as an excuse to declare war, so as to wrest the Rhine delta from his sphere of influence.

But apart from its origin, the War of the Spanish Succession has few points of resemblance with the war which preceded it. The death of William III. brought the allied cause the matchless services of the great Duke of Marlborough; and in the theatre of war bordering the Channel and its approaches it was not the French but the allied armies which triumphed. And in the navy, just as much as in the army, the aspect of things had changed. There was no need for the battleships

of Queen Anne to win by some great naval battle the command of the sea. They enjoyed the command of the sea already; and it only remained to decide how best to employ that inestimable advantage. Louis XIV. still possessed fleets and still possessed battleships; but experience had taught him that they must be used with discretion, and not risked in a great pitched battle like Barfleur. England, then, enjoyed undisturbed control over the Narrow Seas in a manner for which preceding ages supply no parallel. The hills of Kent and the hills of Picardy might have been reunited, the Thames might have become again a confluent of the Rhine, for any reference that is made in English text-books to the manner in which the gallant soldiers of Queen Anne were conveyed with all their baggage and impedimenta to the battlefields of Ramillies and Oudenarde.[1]

The absolute nature of Britain's sea supremacy—due, it should be remembered, almost as much to the cessation of Dutch rivalry as to the victories over the French—made it inevitable that the statesmen of Queen Anne should turn to wider and further-flung spheres of maritime activity. They hoped to frustrate the ambitions of Louis XIV. by setting upon the throne of Spain a monarch who could never by any chance succeed to the throne of France. Louis had proclaimed his grandson "King Philip V.," and sent him to take possession of his heritage. The allies selected an Austrian, whom they styled "King Charles III.," and it was in placing upon this Prince's head the actual Spanish crown that the Royal Navy, in their opinion, could best be employed. Ships, clearly enough, could not reach Madrid, as the soldiers of Louis had done; but they could dominate the seaboard of Spain, as they had dominated that of the Low Countries, and so enable the statesmen and soldiers to work their will. When the scheme was put before the naval experts, they pointed out that Spain was a thousand miles away, and its Mediterranean coasts at least double the distance; and that if British naval power were to be continuously employed in those distant waters, it would be necessary to provide a base, like Portsmouth and

[1] Below, p. 252.

Chatham, where the ships could be reconditioned without coming home.

A battleship must, in the nature of things, be to some extent self-sufficient. She is more self-sufficient than a regiment of infantry, which exhausts itself by movement and looks to special supply services for food and sustenance; nor does she establish behind her as she advances a long-drawn trail of vulnerable lines of communication. Moreover, the battleship of the period with which we are dealing was more self-contained than ancient battleships, and much more self-contained than modern.[1] The galleys of old time, being propelled by human limbs, were so light of build as to be unable to carry supplies for more than a day or two; the modern mechanical battleship depends for her motion upon liquid or solid fuel, to which she must devote a proportion of her space. But the ship of the line, like the windmill, was tireless as long as the wind would blow, and able to devote all her very considerable carrying capacity to the stores required by the heavy guns and the officers and men who fought them.

Yet the self-sufficing qualities, even of the sailing ship, were strictly limited. A thousand miles would deplete or exhaust the most liberal supply of consumable stores, and three hours of battle or thirty of tempest would make resort to a dockyard imperative. Of what service then would it be to send a fleet to hold the Mediterranean, if two or three months' sojourn there reduced it to impotence?

Animated by a desire to satisfy the sailors, the government sanctioned the acquisition of a base in southern Europe as soon as ever the war broke out. For this purpose a combined expedition was equipped, with a fleet under Rooke the victor of La Hogue, and an army under the Duke of Ormonde. It would have been wiser, perhaps, if the navy had been given complete liberty to select its own site; but the government saw a chance of using the occasion to influence political opinion in Spain, and therefore, in defiance of warnings, resolved on the capture of Cadiz. Divided aim in warfare is always a handi-

[1] The sailing man-of-war could keep the sea for five months to the modern battleship's three.

cap, and the expedition failed, as it was bound to do. The people in the south-west of Spain had already decided in favour of the candidate whom their own King had chosen, and were in consequence impervious to any sort of argument but force. If Rooke had been commissioned to help himself to what he wanted, there can be little doubt that he would have done so. After events proved it! But he was stringently forbidden to alienate the Spaniards, and having asked for their harbour in the name of "Charles III.," and been refused in the name of "Philip V.," he was unable to reconcile a bombardment of the city with the amicable attitude enjoined by his instructions. Naval strategy and political endeavour neutralized each other, though that explanation did not appeal to Rooke's contemporaries, who condemned him roundly without knowing the facts.

On his way homeward Rooke obtained intelligence that the Spanish treasure-fleet from the New World had been safely escorted home by one of Louis XIV.'s admirals, and behind the impregnable barrier of a specially constructed boom was unloading millions of gold in Vigo Bay. There were no longer any restraints upon his action, for England, whatever might be her attitude towards Spain, was certainly at war with France. Without a moment's hesitation he swooped upon his prey, and with the same spirit as at La Hogue, hacked through the boom, struck panic into his foes, and overwhelmed them in destruction. The forty-one vessels opposed to him included thirteen battleships, but though they fought gamely and received help from the boom and from batteries ashore, Rooke accounted for all of them. The fleet of forty-one ceased to exist, and Rooke returned to England with treasure not less valuable than that which Sir Francis Drake brought back from his memorable voyage round the world.

The wealth of Vigo might very suitably have been set aside to meet the big expenditure which a base in southern Europe was certain to involve. But the victory brought another benefit in its train, which in the opinion of the government relieved them of the necessity of providing exactly what the navy demanded. The Portuguese were so impressed by an

event, of which they certainly obtained the best view, that they hurried to join the winning side and made an alliance with Rooke's countrymen. This afforded Great Britain the use of Lisbon as a base—Lisbon, the finest harbour in the whole Peninsula. Although the treaty between the two countries was not ratified till the summer of 1703 was waning, the government felt that there was no time to be lost, and hurried the fleet to sea. Rooke's experience at Cadiz had shown them that the west side of Spain offered poor prospects, and with a ready-made base to justify their boldness, they ordered Rooke's successor to the Mediterranean. Here, however, a fresh predicament arose, for the French Toulon fleet was by no means negligible, and Toulon was as far removed from Lisbon as Lisbon was from Plymouth.

This would have mattered less if Lisbon had proved itself satisfactory. But the difficulties of a strange language and of an alien system of weights and measures, the unpreparedness of the Portuguese and their lack of adequate supplies for a first-class fleet, their old-fashioned accommodation and their shortage of dockyard hands, made the place no substitute for an English base. The English fleet, which did not leave the Mediterranean till October, found no comfort in the Tagus, and was driven by necessity home. All the ships' companies suffered terrible privations, fifteen hundred of the sick died and were committed to the deep, and those of the seamen who could still handle the ropes were weak and feeble from hunger. On 17th November the battleships anchored in the Downs, and a few days later were struck by one of the most violent and fatal storms of which we have record—the storm which, according to Defoe, destroyed one million pounds worth of property in London alone; the storm in which Addison discerned the figure of the destroying Angel executing judgment on a guilty land. Terrible was the punishment of the unhappy vessels, whose only fault had been too unquestioning an obedience. Twelve of them were destroyed by the blast of the tempest, and those of the seamen who had escaped death from starvation now perished in the waves. The disaster was of a magnitude greater than the fleet of

England had ever suffered at the hand of any human agency.

Unabashed by what had happened, the government decided in 1704 again to send the fleet to Spanish waters, and detailed for this service Sir George Rooke, who had been kept at home during the previous year. As soon as he reached his destination he tackled in his usual masterful way the outstanding problem of Toulon. To enter the Mediterranean with purpose other than that of locating the French fleet was, he felt, to repeat the mistake of the year of Beachy Head. If the ships in Toulon could not cut his communications, they could certainly evade him; and if they evaded him, they could reach the Channel and embarrass the people at home. If the British fleet was to enter the Mediterranean and maintain itself there, then its first need was to lock the door behind it, so that those already there could not escape. Fortunately the entrance to the great inland sea is at its narrowest part only nine miles wide, and here the Pillars of Hercules, Gibraltar and Ceuta, lift up their towering bulk. Many commanders, sailing through the Strait, had cast envious glances at the northerly rock. Rooke decided to take it.

The decision was sufficiently momentous, if only on account of the strategic significance of the stroke; but there was more in it than that. The end proposed was not sailors' work at all, but soldiers'. The only argument that would have justified the employment of the fleet for a purpose purely military would have been the destruction of all hostile ships that could by any chance interfere. To which consideration may be added this comment: that if Rooke had enjoyed the good fortune to meet and destroy the Toulon fleet, he would not then have been in a position to contemplate any further proceedings until he had visited a base better equipped than Lisbon. For the capture of Gibraltar involved in the first place a bombardment, and in the second the landing of a garrison to hold it. Seeing then that the French fleet at Toulon had not yet been located, Rooke's resolve to expend the artillery energy and the man power of his ships was one of the most tremendous risks ever accepted by a naval commander-in-chief.

All went admirably. Rooke's dispositions were perfect. Under cover of the main body of his ships a select squadron conducted a bombardment. Under cover of the bombardment the marines[1] were landed at a distance from the town and marched against the fortress over the sandy isthmus. And while the marines drew the attention of the defence in their direction, another landing party, composed of seamen, manned the boats on the disengaged side of the ships, and pushing ashore seized the Rock out of hand. As the operation was brought to a triumphal conclusion, Rooke remembered how at Cadiz the Duke of Ormonde had thwarted him, and felt grateful that he had relied upon himself alone.

But, it will be said, if the French ships at Toulon still mustered in strength and had reached the Strait while these military movements proceeded, how terrible would have been the plight of the British! With their ammunition expended, and with two thousand of the men who should have worked the guns now landed on the Rock!

That is exactly what happened! Rooke had with him fifty ships, English and Dutch, and no sooner had he taken Gibraltar than the conjoint fleets of France and Spain came up with an equal number to rescue it. The enemy were fresh, and Rooke's fleet was weary; the enemy's ships were but newly equipped, and Rooke's running through their supplies; the enemy were fighting off their own coast, and Rooke was a thousand miles from home. The battle was fought off Malaga, and raged till nightfall. Throughout the engagement the English had to husband their powder and shot, and towards the close began to wonder what they should do on the following day. But under cover of darkness the French and Spanish made off, leaving Rooke incontestably master of the field. He made

[1] In the first great struggle with the Dutch (1652-4), the demand for men of the right sort to serve the State at sea outran the supply, and Cromwell sent some of his soldiers afloat. At the Restoration, when the later Dutch Wars revived the manning problem, regiments were raised on purpose for the sea service; and the Duke of Marlborough, as a young officer, served at the battle of Solebay. It was not, however, till the middle of the eighteenth century that the "marines" were dissociated from the army and brought directly under naval control.

careful arrangements for the safety of the marines ashore, grouped the most serviceable of his ships into a squadron under Admiral Leake for the protection of the Rock, and returned with the rest of his fleet to England. On reaching home he was vilified by his countrymen for fighting half-heartedly at Malaga, calumniated for his lukewarmness in capturing no prizes, unfavourably contrasted with the Duke of Marlborough, and dismissed from his Majesty's service!

Louis XIV. knew that Rooke had taken Gibraltar without an army, and that Lisbon was still inadequate as a base for the squadron which he had left behind. He therefore decided to recover the "key of the Mediterranean" before the English could bring out troops to hold it and engineers to add to its strength. To make a certainty of the matter, he multiplied his besieging army till it reached the imposing figure of fifty thousand men. At these legions Rooke's handful of marines flung a brave defiance, and looked to the sea for relief. To prevent relief coming, Louis sent a squadron to complete the investment, and waited serenely for the end. The French admiral found comfortable quarters for himself at Cadiz and stationed his flotilla in Gibraltar Bay. In October it looked as if the end were at hand, and the marines were summoned to surrender. At that moment Leake arrived with fresh provisions, and destroying Louis XIV.'s flotilla, landed his seamen to rebuild the bastions and put new heart into the defence. Winter, however, compelled him to withdraw, and in the early spring the French admiral decided to leave Cadiz and complete the investment himself. He took up a commanding position, made contact with the general ashore, and in no uncertain voice bade the marines to capitulate. In that supreme moment back from Lisbon came Leake, and sighting the French fleet off Marbella, had the satisfaction first of destroying it and then of listening to the tramp of thousands, as the armies of Louis raised the siege and marched away in despair.

In 1705, then, the Mediterranean was fastened with an English padlock, and Lisbon was beginning to be of some use as a royal naval base in southern Europe. It was possible at last,

in fact, to begin operations upon the eastern coast of Spain, where the British candidate was believed to be more popular. An important expedition, partly naval, partly military, left England in May, and in August appeared off Barcelona. The intention was that "King Charles III." should land there, establish his court, and summon from thence all his subjects to submit. The city was bidden from the sea to open its gates, but declared itself unmistakably for the French candidate. The army was, thereupon, transported ashore and approached the place in form. No progress, however, was made, and the soldiers declared that nothing less than a siege train could reduce Barcelona, and that even if the heavy ordnance were forthcoming (which it obviously was not), it would need to be mounted on the high ground to the south of the town.

In an hour of anguish and disappointment Sir Clowdisley Shovel, in command of the fleet, proved himself the true successor of Rooke. He enquired of the soldiers whether they could capture the high ground from the land side, and receiving an answer in the affirmative, cheerfully undertook to do the rest. First he converted the guns of his fleet into a siege train, with handy men as gunners and engineers, then with marvellous ingenuity and resourcefulness he lifted his siege train from the sea-level to the top of the cliffs, and finally placed his batteries, opened fire, and compelled the place to surrender. Of nothing more remarkable do the annals of warfare bear record.

And now, as after the capture of Gibraltar, exhaustion compelled the fleet to return to England for replenishment of supplies. Sir Clowdisley bade farewell to the "King," but remembering what Rooke had done in a parallel case, he grouped the less weary ships into a squadron under Admiral Leake for the safeguard of Barcelona.

Leake stayed by the "King" as long as he could, but at length was compelled himself to recondition, and set out in mid-winter for Lisbon. The journey was a thousand miles, and taxed his fleet beyond its strength. Foul weather prevailed, the ships were crippled aloft, and crawled towards

their inhospitable base. The men were literally dropping with fatigue; and when they needed all the comforts obtainable, were reduced to a cup of water and a single biscuit per day. The mortality was horrifying, and when Lisbon was reached it was found to be as empty as a beggar's bowl.

To fill the cup of misery to overflowing came tidings which showed that, despite all the Duke of Marlborough's successes elsewhere, the war of the Succession in Spain was like to terminate with sudden abruptness in favour of the French. Louis XIV., realizing that the allies had left their "King" in check, had (it seems) hurled against Barcelona twenty thousand troops, and these were on the point of capturing it. And the only available rescue party, at its so-called "base," was a thousand miles away!

When he faced the new situation, Leake found but a single crumb of comfort. He knew it to be physically impossible that Louis should have moved so large an army in so short a time without the help of ships. Either the twenty thousand men had been brought by sea, or were dependent on the sea for their supplies. With superhuman efforts he re-equipped his own jaded vessels, whirled them impetuously through the Strait, spurred them ever onwards, without rest, without stopping; found (as he had expected) that the armies of Louis were dependent on sea-borne supplies, scattered the fleets of France to the four winds, and with his customary felicity rescued Barcelona as the clock began to strike the hour of twelve. Never was ransom more timely or more opportune.

The thanks of Britain might have been conveyed to the admiral without a moment's loss of time, for Queen Anne had sent to the Peninsula one who may best be described as a temporary governor-general, one who was to act in distant waters as Howard of Effingham had acted in 1588. Unhappily this sea-viceroy, the Earl of Peterborough, was unfitted for the post he filled. He reported to the Queen that he had relieved Barcelona himself, and that Admiral Leake had mischievously endeavoured to thwart him in the execution of his duty. Admiral Leake was in consequence recalled, and reached England at the close of 1706.

In the next year things came to a head. Sir Clowdisley Shovel returned to the Mediterranean, but arrived too late to unknot the tangled skein, with the threads of which Leake alone was fully conversant. The British army and its Portuguese allies, having crossed the Peninsula and reached the coast on its friendly side, found no welcome battleships on which to lean, and suffered disastrous defeat at Almanza. Nor was that all, or the worst. Kept out too late as in 1703, the fleet came home through weather impossible for ships of the line, and the storms once more reaped their harvest. The British flagship was lost with all hands, and other ships besides, and the strongest swimmer in the whole fleet, the incomparable Sir Clowdisley Shovel himself, after cleaving the icy waters and making land, was knocked on the head by a Scilly islander, who coveted one of his rings.

Here, then, at last was sensation sufficient to shake the people from their indifference to the needs of the fleet. The contrite government in 1708 sent Leake back to the Mediterranean with force sufficient to help himself to any naval base he fancied. He had already captured Carthagena and Alicante on the east coast of Spain, and found them to be but second-class havens, and while Peterborough had been taking his character away he had captured Majorca and Iviza. These showed improvement, but not enough. Proverbial wisdom said that the Mediterranean possessed three first-class harbours —June, July, and Port Mahon. Leake had sampled the shortness of the summer months, and prudently decided to make trial of Minorca. The works were stout, and the forts strongly manned; but the need of the fleet gave strength to his blows, and the island surrendered at the sound of his name.

Two years had yet to pass before Port Mahon became the actual equivalent of Chatham, Devonport, or Portsmouth; but in 1710, just as the war in the Peninsula came to an end, the Royal Navy found itself in a position to make a good beginning.

The Peace of Utrecht confirmed Great Britain in possession of her new base in southern Europe and of the key which admitted her to the great inland sea, but these permanent

acquisitions did not stop contemporaries from contrasting the navy's work in the war unfavourably with that of the army. As if the miracle whereby Marlborough—an *insular* product —became the military dictator of the continent were not testimonial sufficient to naval power ; and as if there could be any doubt that Britannia would have ruled the broader seas as efficiently as she ruled the narrow ones, provided that the senate and people of England had provided the navy in good time with the base for which it asked.

CHAPTER XI

MORE SCAPEGOATS

THE Peace of Utrecht, thanks to Marlborough's victories, settled the burning question of Antwerp in a manner entirely satisfactory to the two chief states which had supported the long struggle with Louis XIV. The debatable land between France and the Rhine was by the treaty awarded to Austria, an inland power, far removed from the delta, and cherishing at this time no maritime aspirations. This settlement meant that London, without fear of interruption, could develop commercially, until Austria in her turn became involved in war, and the ownership of Antwerp was once more under dispute.

This interval of well-earned repose lasted for nearly thirty years. Trade flourished, wealth accumulated, and the memory of Dutch pre-eminence in the commercial world faded and lost all its bitterness. London became the world's greatest exchange, and the United Kingdom grew fat, prosperous, and comfortable. Money became the accepted standard alike in politics, in fashion, and in principles of conduct. Quick roads to wealth and fortune were indicated and followed with blind eagerness. Bribery and corruption raised their hateful heads, and the one unpardonable sin was to be poor.

During this sordid epoch the navy did indeed fare somewhat better than it had done in the corresponding part of the seventeenth century. And yet its fate demands similar commiseration. There were too many salaried officials dependent upon the fleet to allow it to be forgotten or left entirely without

funds. But if it was saved from perishing as in early Stewart times, it was assuredly neglected, impoverished, and starved, and every department of the service suffered. The establishment of officers and men, which at Louis XIV.'s death (1715) numbered twenty-seven thousand, in five years shrank to a quarter of that figure. The expenditure upon the navy at a time when British responsibilities were being increased in every quarter of the globe, sank to less than half of what had been voted when the Crown first passed to the House of Hanover. As for the battleships, they were so carelessly designed that one Admiral wittily complained that they must have been "manufactured by the mile and cut off in chunks when required."

Worse than all, at this time of mercenary motive and debased principle, grew up the insidious heresy that the British navy is primarily, if not exclusively, a war machine, and should, in time of peace, be reduced to the lowest minimum. The argument was plausible and specious, and commanded a ready audience, because war-time risks must obviously diminish as soon as peace returns. But how assess the minimum? Whom trust to declare it? Carried to its logical conclusion, the argument for reduction would have swept the entire fleet out of existence. But even Walpole admitted that a navy cannot be improvised, and that some nucleus must be kept in being out of which to evolve potential force when it should be required.

There were still the few who argued that other states and nations were protected from attack by mountains, or deserts, or by other natural features, and that Great Britain alone could be approached on every side over the countless paths of the sea. But such voices did but cry in a wilderness of empty benches, and at length a compromise was arranged between those who insisted that the size of the fleet should be proportional to the number of merchantmen to be guarded and the trade routes to be patrolled, and those who (for want of a better title) may be styled the abolitionists. "The Age of Common Sense," pluming itself on the sanity of its judgment, decided that adequate provision should be made for

such contingencies (and such contingencies only) as the statesman's eye could foreshadow.

Unfortunately for the conduct of human affairs, the foresight of even the wisest statesman cannot penetrate very far into the future; and a workmanlike scheme, covering all immediate needs, may seem amazingly inadequate thirty years later, especially if the thirty years have been marked by commercial and colonial expansion overseas.[1]

In 1740 the ruler of Austria died, leaving no male issue, and, by Teutonic tradition, his diadem could not be worn by his daughter. The Austrian territories were in consequence preyed upon by unscrupulous princes, and the War of the Austrian Succession broadened into an outbreak of world-wide magnitude. Spain welcomed the opportunity of recovering lost possessions in Italy, and, under the circumstances, nothing was more natural than that France should make another bid for Antwerp and its hinterland. Austria was too deeply involved in Central Europe to spare her best troops for the defence of the delta, Holland had no longer the strength which she had put forth in the heyday of her greatness, and Great Britain had made provision for such contingencies only as her peace-loving statesmen could foresee. As a natural result came the victory of France at Fontenoy, and the conquest of what she had failed to obtain in the greater days of Louis XIV.

The dominance of the British fleet in home waters made

[1] The colonial first-fruits of Blake's reassertion of British naval power was the conquest and occupation of Jamaica (1655). From that date onwards, and especially after the close of the wars against Louis XIV., British commercial activities in the West Indies grew and multiplied. The Carribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico, however, were still preponderantly Spanish; and, in a period of naval decline, British trade-routes passing through them became highly vulnerable, and British sea-borne property was exposed to molestation. It was the loud demand of British traders and shippers for protection against Spanish lawlessness that in 1739 brought about the War of Jenkins' Ear and Admiral Vernon's surprise attack upon Porto Bello. The subsequent British reverses must be accounted the price paid for neglect of both the fighting services. The failure at Carthagena, in particular, was more military than naval, and Vernon might have escaped the lion's share of subsequent censure if Smollett had not been captured by the press-gang and forced to serve with the fleet.

the redemption of the delta not impossible. But in a struggle of world-wide magnitude it was impossible for the British fleet to be paramount everywhere; and maritime interest in this, as in the preceding war, came to a focus in the Mediterranean.

Here the territories of our ally, Austria, which at that time straddled the Alpine barrier, came very near to the sea coast in the neighbourhood of Genoa. The town of Genoa itself, with the surrounding district, constituted a separate republic. But the government was venal, and for a handsome price was prepared to sell a right-of-way for sea-borne troops into the plain of Lombardy. Spain and France, acting as allies, were thus able to land twenty thousand men in Austrian territory, and Austria had none of the naval power which could starve them by cutting off supplies and reinforcements.

This then was the task of Admiral Mathews, British commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean. He had as his first duty to prevent the passage of further troops from France and Spain to Italy. The enemy required fifty thousand additional men at the front, and naturally enough was not prepared to lift them over the Alps. The sea passage was the only practicable route, and Mathews stood there like a lion at bay. His position, however, was a very difficult one, especially after the French and Spanish fleets had united in the unassailable recesses of Toulon. He had the advantages of a good base at Port Mahon, and in that respect was luckier than the admirals of the Spanish Succession. But, unlike them, he held command after a long season of inactivity, and the multifold calls upon the Admiralty left them powerless to fit him out as they had equipped Rooke, Shovel, and Leake.

In effect, his task comprised the work both of the English fleet and of the Dutch flotilla, which together had thwarted the Duke of Parma in 1588. He needed a squadron of small fast vessels to keep watch on the fifty thousand hostile troops who awaited the order to embark for Italy, and he needed also his sail of the line to cover the enemy's battle-fleet in Toulon. Unhappily the frigates or cruisers, for which he incessantly asked, were needed elsewhere to patrol British trade routes,

which now stretched like a network over the world. As a result he was left without a flotilla, and all he could do was to attempt by a close blockade of the enemy's base to ensure against all eventualities.

Success crowned his efforts until the spring of 1744, when the precarious position of affairs in Italy induced the Franco-Spanish higher command to order their combined fleet in Toulon to sally forth and clear the route to Genoa. The mandate was similar to that which in 1692 produced the battle of Barfleur. Obedient to orders, the blockaded ships put to sea, and Admiral Mathews instantly sighted them. Instead of attacking him, however, they made away, as if their one intent was to show him a clean pair of heels.

Mathews was perplexed, and the more he considered the position the more perplexed he became. He pursued the enemy; and when they continued to fly, he made sure that they were drawing him from the post of duty, so that their 50,000 soldiers could proceed to Italy. Duty seemed to call him back to Toulon. And yet instinct told him that the enemy's battlefleet must not on any account be allowed to escape. With swift decision he resolved to cripple it as it ran, and, when he had compelled it to seek shelter in port again, to return himself swiftly to Toulon before the hostile troops could put to sea.

If he had possessed a flotilla, and could have put the transports out of his mind, he would have been free to engage the enemy with his whole heart and endeavour to force a decision. Perhaps it was as well that his duties were complex, for when he flew his flag for battle, such was the disorder in his ranks that the two long lines of the opposing fleets made close contact in one sector only. Mathews' own ship and those near enough to feel the magnetic force of his example laid about them valiantly and in a manner which Blake would have approved; but the rest of the British vessels, partly from the tactical inexperience of their captains, partly from the lack of team discipline in the squadron leaders, made little of their opportunities, and contributed nothing to their country's renown.

The tremendous impetus of Mathews' own attack fell upon

the rear of the enemy's formation, where the Spanish vessels lost at once all semblance of morale. They swerved and wriggled and broke their own line; and the French, after attempting to shield them, accompanied them in their precipitate and undignified retreat. Not until they were all snugly and safely berthed in Carthagena did they issue their claim to have won a victory, or, in plain English, escaped with their lives.

As for Admiral Mathews, he had achieved (practically single-handed) all that he aimed at. He had crippled the enemy's main fleet as it ran past him, and then, doubling back to Toulon, had resumed the blockade before a single transport could emerge.

When the news in its first crude shape reached England, the Admiral was freely and harshly criticized. Not thus had the Spanish Armada been dealt with, it was said, nor the insolence of the Dutch been chastised. The British commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean was summoned home, and tried by court martial on two main counts. He was accused of bringing about a battle without staying to order and dress his line, and of engaging the enemy in a half-hearted fashion, as if he had something better to do than pursue them. The Admiral accepted responsibility for his actions, was found guilty on both counts, and was dismissed with ignominy from the service of his King and country. Never was there a clearer case of deliberate sacrifice. Mathews suffered, like a scapegoat, for the thirty years of neglect which had reduced the navy from its state of efficiency to the confusion which results from inexperience, and for the failure of the senate and people of England to supply him with the ordinary tools which, he had informed them, were indispensable.

The consignment of Mathews to shame and oblivion brought relief to the national conscience, and the pamphleteers in time ceased to make him the object of their abuse. In 1744, the same year as the battle of Toulon, Anson returned from his voyage round the world, bringing with him a group of young officers trained in the hard school of privation and endurance. In May, 1747, with ships commanded by his own disciples, the

circumnavigator won off Finisterre a battle of an entirely new pattern, capturing the whole of the enemy's fleet, and tugging it triumphantly home. A few months later, in the second battle of Finisterre, Hawke won a victory almost as complete, and the country seemed at last to be recovering its old position at sea.

The Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle was signed in the following year, but, like Ryswick, proved no better than a breathing-space, and a few years later Great Britain was implicated in a second Austrian War, wherein she found herself in opposition to her late ally, who on the other hand received assistance from several strong states, including Russia and France. Now since the Austrians, through the exertions of the British fleet, had at Aix-la-Chapelle recovered their hold on the Rhine delta, and since they had converted the hostility of the French into a cordial partnership, England was automatically relieved of her anxiety with regard to the fate of Antwerp. But this piece of good fortune served only to throw her into a deeper lethargy, and when, in 1756, the Seven Years' War threatened her interests in the Mediterranean, she was far less ready, amazing though it must appear, than she had been in the days of Admiral Mathews.

Of her sleepy unpreparedness the Continental powers were perfectly aware, and France, keenly sensitive to the dominating influence exercised over Mediterranean politics by the British naval base there, determined to take a gambler's risk and land an army for the re-conquest of Minorca. The sluggish rulers of the sea, thereupon, roused themselves in haste from their torpor. But when Admiral John Byng arrived at Gibraltar on his way to assume the Mediterranean command, he learnt that Minorca had yielded to the French—except for a single fortress, which the enemy's bomb-vessels were assailing from the enclosed waters of Port Mahon. Admiral Byng had no army with him, no store-vessels, no siege-train. He had a battle-fleet only, and a very small one.

He proceeded at once to Minorca to see what he could do, and off the mouth of the harbour was confronted by a French fleet equal in size to his own. He took particular care to

order and dress his line, introduced at least one tactical modification of permanent value, and broke at his masthead the signal for battle. The English fleet ran down to the attack and belaboured the French unmercifully, and the French retaliated by firing at masts and sails, so as to hinder the English chances of pursuit. After an engagement lasting for three hours, the French declined further action, or, in the language of the British tars, "ran away."

Byng beyond all doubt was gratified by his victory, but it left him with serious embarrassments. Not only was he unable to pursue the foe, but the injury done to his vessels was so severe that the shipwrights declared them irreparable without resort to a dockyard. Furthermore, the number and state of the wounded called for more than ships could give, and demanded accommodation in hospital. In short, the British fleet required the services of Port Mahon, and Port Mahon was no longer available. If Admiral Byng had been a man of iron resolution he might have bullied his surgeons and shipwrights, turned a callous ear to the groans of the wounded, and attempted to have got into touch with the single fort that still flew the Union Jack. But his thoughts were pivoted on the needs of his fleet, and he returned to refit at Gibraltar. A few days after he had departed the last British fort in Minorca surrendered, as, indeed, it might have done even if he had stayed.

In England once more the Admiral's conduct was greeted with a storm of abuse, and the unhappy Byng was hurried home to be tried as Mathews had been. He was found guilty of not having done all that was humanly possible to help Fort St. Philip, and of letting the enemy off somewhat cheaply in the battle which they had interrupted by their departure. The court martial recommended him to mercy, meaning to say that, if he had not done all that was humanly possible, he had none the less done what he could. By a recent change in the Articles of War, the judges were compelled to pass a nominal sentence of death, and then leave the prisoner's fate to the King and his advisers. Those who approached the fountain of justice on the Admiral's behalf were snubbed for their pains.

On a wild blustering March day in 1757 Admiral Byng walked on to the quarter-deck of the *Monarque*, dressed not as a naval officer but in civilian habit. He held himself erect, with superb assurance, disdained assistance of any kind, himself blindfolded his eyes when he learned that the marines could not do their duty if he looked them in the face, arranged his last signal, knelt on the deck and calmly said his prayers, then dropped his handkerchief to show that he was ready, and died by the hands of his own countrymen. Never surely did any victim of insensate human rage more richly deserve the martyr's crown; for in that hour of shame and deep degradation he shielded with his blood the government, which knew that its naval preparations had been criminally postponed and lamentably inadequate, and he satisfied the murderous instincts of those who once more thrust upon the innocent the burden of their own fault, and proved (to quote from the Admiral's tombstone) that "bravery and loyalty were insufficient securities for the life and honour of a naval officer."

CHAPTER XII

THE EXPANSION OF ENGLAND

TWO forces, having little in common, impelled the British race to colonize the great continent of North America. The earlier stimulus was applied by Sir Walter Raleigh, whose reason for promoting and financing the Virginia voyages was the establishment of a British overseas Empire to balance (like a counterpoise) the undue weight of Spain in world affairs. England in Raleigh's day was not suffering from over-population, and the Island Race, insular in its outlook, extended little sympathy to a project which cannot be said to have borne directly upon domestic affairs. Raleigh, none the less, showed indomitable perseverance, and by the time that he fell a victim to political intrigue his "plantations" were at last beginning to prosper and increase. Others may claim, like Joshua, to have conquered the Promised Land; but it was the prisoner in the Tower who conceived and made practicable the dream of a "New World," peopled by his own countrymen.

Not less British were those who, lacking the loyalty of Raleigh's planters, shook the dust of James's government off their feet, and sailed in the *Mayflower* to establish in "New England" modes of government in Church and State which Stuart ideas of Divine Right rendered impossible at home.

It is a common saying in the Northern States to-day that every man can trace his descent to an ancestor who left home in the *Mayflower*. However paradoxical this may seem, it is really only a neat way of stating that in the wake of this

thrice-famous vessel came a never-ending procession of similar ships, whose names no memory can retain; and if we remind ourselves that, astern of Captains Amadas and Barlow, who took Raleigh's earliest settlers to Roanoke, came an equally famous procession of pioneer craft bound for the "Old Dominion," then we can picture to ourselves the settlement of "North" and "South," and in them the most tremendous expression of sea-power and maritime expansion in the pages of recorded history.

Pilgrim Fathers and Virginians cannot be described as systematic in their scrutiny, or scientific in their investigation, of the Promised Land. Their concern was for the present rather than for the future. They furrowed with their keels the broad Atlantic, sought havens in which to anchor their ships, and chose homesteads which would repay the burden of tilth. Along the eastern seaboard they planted their settlements, and only stretched their eyes towards the Alleghanies as towards delectable mountains, which their children's children might reach in the dim vista of uncounted years.

Far otherwise was it with their rivals! The French, with less real talent for colonization, won renown by the vigour, skill, and resourcefulness with which they explored the gigantic mass of the continent and unfolded its actual shape. They obtained, through their early pioneers, a knowledge of the salient features of North America little inferior to that possessed by well-informed men to-day. They realized, in particular, that the great New World had two main gateways for those who would enter and take possession: that is to say, the Mississippi mouth and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. From these royal portals they found ready-made roads through the primeval forest, and penetrated by water far into the interior. By seizing the gates and opening up the waterways they dominated every prospect which the future held in store, and made the English colonies on the eastern seaboard appear like an intrusive alien fringe upon a continent otherwise French.

Thus the English colonists, as they grew and multiplied, found themselves hemmed in by the rather artificial barrier

of a hinterland which was staked out with claims, but practically unoccupied. In piping times of peace they had no remedy, but occasion for redress arose when France and England crossed swords.

In the War of the English Succession the British navy, as has been seen, was fully occupied in home waters; and so long as the fortunes of William III. and the fate of Antwerp hung in the balance, no other programme could be with safety entertained. In the next war, however, the fleet from the first exercised command of the sea, and opportunity was in consequence afforded of putting a new complexion on American affairs.

The Mississippi gateway, opening as it did into a sub-tropical region, could not compete in attractiveness for British folk with the gateway where, in days gone by, John Cabot had made his landfall. Here, in the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth, Humphrey Gilbert, chief deviser of the colonial projects which Raleigh put into effect, had revived the claim of Britain to the "New Found Land" explored by order of Elizabeth's grandfather.

But in spite of Cabot and in spite of Gilbert, the hold of Great Britain upon what is now her oldest colony was prevented throughout the seventeenth century by the selfishness of the great fishing interests. Those who yearly crossed from Britain to the Banks feared lest a resident population should weaken their monopoly, and so persuaded Parliament to legislate against permanent settlement. Parliamentary decree, however, could not protect them from the encroachments of other races, and when the Spanish Succession War broke out in 1702 both doorposts of the Laurentian entrance—Newfoundland on the right hand side and Acadia on the left—were in firm possession of the King of France.

Admiral Leake was sent out at once, and with his customary dispatch and address captured the great island of Newfoundland, destroying the French settlements and sinking or capturing the French vessels. But before further action could be taken, the government had committed itself to the campaign in the Peninsula, which (as already shown) consumed all the

energies of the Royal Navy until 1710. In that year the government decided upon the reduction of Acadia, and prepared for that purpose an expedition under Commodore Martin. Considerable levies were raised locally by the American colonies, and success crowned the efforts of one of the most smoothly conducted enterprises ever planned.

Both gateposts were thus gained to the doorway of the Canada, as the river St. Lawrence was then called, and it was resolved forthwith to penetrate four hundred miles upstream and capture Quebec, the French headquarters and metropolis. Being relieved of all embarrassments in the Spanish theatre of the war, the government were able to spare five or six thousand seasoned troops, whom they put under the command of General Hill, brother of Mrs. Abigail Masham, the Queen's new favourite. According to the Duchess of Marlborough, Hill as a soldier was "no use," and though this opinion should perhaps be discounted, it is certain that at Almanza he did nothing to prevent his entire regiment from being cut to pieces. But the real commander of an expedition, which, when it ceased to be maritime, never ceased to be water-borne, was Admiral Sir Hovenden Walker, who had served at Barfleur, been with Rooke at Cadiz, and helped Leake to rescue Barcelona. The government, in the hopes of deceiving the French, wrapped their proceedings in the darkest mystery, and even declined to allow the Admiralty to know the destination of Sir Hovenden's ships. The commander-in-chief laboured, in consequence, under an immense handicap, which was heavily increased, after the river had been entered, by the violence of the weather, and a blind ignorance of navigational difficulties due to the want of charts. In a word, the expedition failed in its purpose, though the Admiral deserves commendation for the skill with which he extricated the forces under his charge. He was blamed by the ministers, reviled by his countrymen, and being relieved of his command and dismissed the service, crossed the Atlantic in dudgeon to seek in New England a refuge from abuse and ingratitude.

The Peace of Utrecht confirmed Great Britain in possession of the gateposts of the St. Lawrence—on the left Acadia (which

was rechristened Nova Scotia), and on the right the island of Newfoundland. But the French, fully realizing the meaning of such threats to their transatlantic empire, erected in the period following the peace a fresh obstacle to British ambitions. For a site they selected the island of Cape Breton, which by treaty rights they retained; and here they built and armed, as French military engineers alone could do, the great water fortress of Louisbourg, which henceforth stood as the barbican of Canada, and the impregnable portal of the River St. Lawrence.

When the first of the Austrian wars broke out, England, as already shown, was once again embarrassed by the Antwerp problem; and the battle of Toulon in 1744 gave little promise of immediate attention to American affairs. Yet in the very next year an expedition was equipped for the reduction of the St. Lawrence stronghold. The commander-in-chief, Admiral Sir Peter Warren, whose monument in Westminster Abbey rarely receives the tribute of a casual glance, was admirably qualified for his task. He was a man of singularly attractive personality, and had the enviable gift of inspiring affection in all who served under him. He had large estates in New York, had married a Boston lady, and knew the coast of Massachusetts like his own right hand. He had served for six years on the American station, and had enjoyed full opportunity of studying at first hand the colonial troops who were to act ashore, and occupy the citadel after its capture. Louisbourg was taken, its coveted harbour seized, and a British garrison ensconced behind fortifications which were deemed as impregnable as Gibraltar.

Thus the gateway to French America was thrown open, and a second attempt against Quebec was planned. But in the Rhine delta the fates had been unkind, and the reverse at Fontenoy brought no Duke of Marlborough to lift again the standard of British military prestige. When Britain came to make peace at Aix-la-Chapelle, she had nothing but Louisbourg with which to redeem Antwerp, and accordingly an exchange of the two was effected. At the time it seemed to the British in America cruelly hard that the fruit of their

prowess should be treated as a pawn-ticket in the affairs of Europe. But this view tends to overlook their own obligation to the fleet, whose work in past wars would have gone for nothing if France had pushed her boundary to the Rhine and thrown open the Scheldt.

Thus, then, things stood at the time of Byng's execution in 1757. The French still dammed the river St. Lawrence with a water fortress of world-wide fame, and by so doing held the key to the interior and all the vast possibilities of the continent. The British, on their part, had first to re-establish their prestige at sea, and then for the second time to assault Louisbourg.

Fortunately they still had Anson and Hawke, victors ten years earlier in the twin battles of Finisterre. But until national confidence in the fleet had been re-established, neither of the two could be spared from home. Hawke was needed to take charge of what we should call to-day the Grand Fleet, and Anson, with his genius for organization, was required at the Admiralty to renew and reinvigorate the sinews of the service. The First Lord, however, in his voyage round the world, had discovered in Charles Saunders an officer whom he considered equal to a command of the highest trust, and this opinion had been more than confirmed by Hawke, under whom, at the second battle of Finisterre, Anson's favourite disciple had distinguished himself. As clearly as a signpost, the reputation of Admiral Saunders pointed him out as the man to restore Britain's credit in the Mediterranean, which had been shattered by the loss of Minorca.

As already noted on a previous page,[1] the one bright spot in the tempestuous sky which clouded the beginnings of the Seven Years' War was the alliance of France with the owners of Antwerp. This relieved Great Britain of what had been an almost perpetual embarrassment, and set her at liberty, if she would, to concentrate upon America. In 1758 she equipped an expedition under Admiral Boscawen and General Amherst for the second assault upon Cape Breton Isle. The task was naturally more difficult than in 1745, for the previous expedition had warned the French of the methods which the assailants

[1] Above, p. 150.

By permission of "Country Life"

FIREPLACE IN THE ADMIRALTY BOARD ROOM

Note the festoon of trophies and nautical instruments carved by Grinling Gibbons, and the weather-gauge which enabled the Lords of the Admiralty to see at a glance the direction of the wind

were likely to employ. But nothing could daunt the cool intrepidity of Boscawen, and the resourcefulness with which he devised fresh expedients when old expedients failed. He put the army ashore, kept it supplied with food, guns, and ammunition, blockaded the whole island, choked the harbour mouth, destroyed the enemy's ships at their anchorage, satisfied the smallest demand of the soldiers almost before it was made, charted the approaches to the city walls, and moved in majestically to the final attack as the last French battleships committed suicide. The soldiers ashore co-operated nobly, but the heart of the defence melted like wax at the thought that Boscawen's fleet gripped Cape Breton with a strangle-hold which nothing but a more powerful fleet could relax.

The second capture of Louisbourg was instantly followed by the renewal of the scheme which in 1711 had ended the career of Admiral Sir Hovenden Walker. It was resolved to push up the St. Lawrence again and capture the capital of French America. For reasons which will presently declare themselves, it was not found possible to spare Boscawen, and for the command of an expedition which was to comprise forty more ships than the Spaniards had sent against England in 1588, Anson made choice of Admiral Saunders, who had already finished the first Herculean task assigned to him, and in a single campaign had restored his country's prestige in the Mediterranean. To prohibit, or at least to minimize, the appalling risks which had in 1711 proved fatal, Anson added to Saunders' staff the prince of all British navigators—Cook, the discoverer of New Zealand and circumnavigator of the antarctic continent. For such an enterprise reliable charts were a first necessity, and as reliable charts were not to be had, Cook and the other masters of the fleet had responsibilities of a magnitude which it would be difficult to exaggerate. The military forces, hardly more numerous than those which had accompanied Sir Hovenden Walker, were under the famous General James Wolfe, who had earned golden opinions at Louisbourg.

Terrible difficulties were encountered in the task of transferring a battle-fleet from the Atlantic to the "Basin," as the

St. Lawrence is called where it widens suddenly in front of Quebec. Some of the larger vessels indeed proved too unwieldly to squeeze through the labyrinth of waters and were left to patrol the lower reaches of the river; but the battleships which dropped anchor in view of Montcalm's army, together with the host of attendant vessels accompanying them, presented a sufficiently formidable array.

The French, who had timely news of their approach, and remembered how England in 1588 had expelled the Armada from Calais Roads, were resolved what to do. With ample time for preparation, they had fitted out a squadron of fireships, and these they unleashed under the black dome of night to make an end of Admiral Saunders. What followed was a revelation to all who had not been privileged to accompany Anson and this, his chief disciple, round the world. The peril to a huddled pack of wooden shipping in a confined space, which Cook had not yet had time to survey, was sufficient to strike panic even into the stoutest hearts. But with cheerful and unflurried briskness, Saunders manned and dropped his boats, advanced in silence to meet the flaming death, grappled the incendiaries with hooks of steel, and hauled them with a will till they bumped upon the shallows and harmlessly burnt themselves out.

In the weeks that followed, every effort was made to engage Montcalm in battle and defeat him. But the cunning French general had placed himself in a position of almost unassailable strength. He had the "Basin" in front of him, Quebec and the river St. Charles on his right, and the river Montmorenci on his left. The energetic and gifted General Wolfe matched skill with skill and strategy with strategy. The fleet assisted him at every turn as readily and as efficiently as at Louisbourg; but the French position was too strong, and, when no alternative presented itself but a frontal attack, which Montcalm expected and Wolfe resolutely refused to countenance, it became evident that the army could do no more.

Meanwhile, with incredible daring some of the battleships had run the gauntlet of the city batteries and squeezed

themselves through the narrow defile which led from the Basin into the river above Quebec. Here at first nothing but disappointment attended them: for, on Montcalm's side of the stream, the cliffs rose up to a height of two hundred feet. But at last a scramble-way or goat-track was found, leading from the water to the heights of Abraham, on which the city ramparts stood. And this absurdly inadequate staircase gave the British commanders the clue to the solution of their puzzle. "Put me and my army," General Wolfe had always said, "on the heights of Abraham, and French America is ours!"

Everything, then, depended on the Navy, and Saunders' final plan of attack put the battleships to such use as only a sailor genius could devise. His fleet was by now divided into two squadrons; one in the Basin, and one in the upper river. Both were to act simultaneously, but the part of the former must be described first. The Admiral selected for his purpose the blackest of black nights, knowing what handicaps darkness would impose on all but his own men. Then at a moment, when all but the sentries were asleep, he suddenly shattered the silence with his brazen-throated broadsides, and opened from every ship in the Basin the resonant prelude to the night attack which Montcalm had always expected on his front. The French shook off slumber and stood to their arms, and through hours of ceaseless, deafening reverberating cannonade strained their eyes towards the Basin to discover where the British boats were putting the troops ashore.

The salient feature, however, of Saunders' main plan was borrowed from the "Wooden Horse of Troy." The soldiers who were to capture and hold Quebec were hidden in hollow vessels made by man. But in which hollow vessels? For all that Montcalm knew, the entire British army was concealed in the ships which bombarded his front. As a matter of fact, under the Navy's magic cloak of invisibility, the entire British army had been transferred elsewhere. During the afternoon preceding the attack, the battleships in the Upper River, with demonstrative exhibitions of activity,

suddenly altered course and made off westward, as if they were intending a visit to Montreal. But this was another blind, to deceive any French who might be watching, and who were clever enough (an improbable contingency) to guess what these ships contained.

Then when darkness fell, and Saunders developed his feint on Montcalm's front, the real wooden horses turned themselves about, and lowering their boats, began to discharge into them their living cargo. One quarter of Wolfe's army being thus, in a water-sense, deployed, advanced in the boats to the foot of the staircase, which few men could have found by day, and none but British bluejackets could have found in inky darkness. As the boats began to empty, the ships themselves, moving more slowly, brought up their reinforcements, and so to the accompaniment of the Admiral's bombardment, the army was hoisted up to the heights of Abraham where Wolfe desired that it should be. Each soldier carried his musket and bandolier; but everything else was left to the sailors, who, as at Barcelona in 1705, sent up provisions, ammunition, supply-train, and even twenty-four pounders, with as smooth an efficiency as they would have used to lower topmasts, or curbed the mad escapades of a split main topsail in a sudden snoring gale. Darkness or light made little difference to them; and their cheerful spirits, amazing steadiness, and unassuming self-effacement, gave something approaching certainty of success to the most hazardous enterprise ever planned.

The brilliant little victory on the heights above, not unnaturally, focused contemporary interest, and distracted attention from every figure but the gentle hero who laid down his life for his country. The Navy, in consequence, still awaits its vote of thanks; and the only reward extended to the silent selflessness of Saunders has been a universal desire to attribute to the General all that the Admiral with his seamen and his ships achieved.[1]

[1] Limitations of space forbid a review of naval operations in India during the Seven Years' War; but these deserve almost as much consideration as the work of Saunders in America. When the news of the Black Hole reached Madras the British fleet on that station was under

The fall of Quebec and consequent acquisition of North America by the British was not a possibility which the French had overlooked or were ready to accept with resignation. But it was in the Narrow Seas at home that they planned the great coup which was to frustrate the undertaking of Admiral Saunders, either before or after its completion. They determined on nothing less than the invasion of the British Isles and the dictation of terms in London. Their scheme, which presupposed the absence from Great Britain of the one hundred and seventy ships in the St. Lawrence, showed greater originality than any similar scheme either before or since. Fifty thousand troops were selected for embarkation, but the point of departure was concealed. Flat-bottomed boats were built indiscriminately all round the coast, so as to attract the attention of vigilant Britishers; and Rodney was much admired for his destruction in the Seine mouth of a considerable flotilla which actually had no part or lot in the plan. The real basis of the undertaking was the amalgamation of the Channel and Toulon fleets (as in the year of Beachy Head), and this seemed to be facilitated by the loss to Britain of her Mediterranean dockyard at Port Mahon. When, therefore, the two French fleets had united at Brest, they were to receive intelligence of the place of embarkation, thither repair without delay, take charge of 25,000 troops, and, after a wide detour through the Atlantic, land the exulting host in the West of Scotland, just as the young Pretender had landed in 1745. Then, while these invaders occupied Edinburgh, the battleships would reverse the Armada route, circumnavigate the British Isles, and, reappearing off the Rhine Delta, transfer another 25,000 men to the neighbourhood of Colchester. It was well known that Britain had not the where-

peremptory orders to return to England. Admiral Watson, however, declined to obey the Admiralty decree, and decided to stay and save the situation in India. Without his assistance, it is not too much to say, Clive would have been powerless. It was Watson who conveyed the punitive expedition to Bengal; Watson who steered the battleships into the Hooghly when the pilots declared the enterprise too hazardous; Watson who turned the Nawab's position from the river, and so effected the relief of Fort William; and Watson whose naval power made possible the conquest of Chandernagore.

withal to meet and defeat 50,000 men, and all that France needed was patience to wait for the opportune moment in which to push her soldiers across. But first the mighty escort of battleships must assemble in the haven of Brest.

Assuredly no man in 1759 had a less enviable task than Admiral Boscawen, British commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean. He had no Port Mahon on which to base his fleet; and the first damage he suffered aloft would compel him like Byng to retire to Gibraltar, and leave the Toulon fleet at liberty to slip away and work its nefarious design. He clung to his post till July, but by that time had consumed his supplies and was compelled to raise the blockade. On reaching Gibraltar he set a reliable frigate on sentry-go, so that nothing should open the Strait without his knowledge. The French, however, followed hard upon his heels, and, passing the Rock under cover of night, stretched away into the Atlantic. Boscawen was dining ashore when he heard the news. With one bound he was out of the house, and a few minutes later was on board his ship, galvanizing his whole fleet into activity. In three hours the first vessels were ready, and, weighing anchor, dashed off in order to set the pace. The rest struggled out as best they could, and, like a huntsman, the Admiral rounded them up and whipped them on to the trail. Before breakfast next day the French were sighted, and ere the sun set Boscawen had overwhelmed them or scattered them to the four winds. Never before was battle like the battle of Lagos; never was one that counted more to the growing British Empire.

And there was yet better to follow! Off Brest Admiral Hawke, supported from home dockyards, maintained his blockade not merely through the long summer months, but deep into the heart of winter. It was not until November that the violence of the storms drove him home, and in that hour the French resolved to strike. The resolution perhaps was rash, for the year was far gone, and the mighty amalgamation of the Brest and Toulon fleets could never now assemble. But the military preparations had long been ready, and the fall of Quebec called for desperate remedies. The Brest fleet

had grown in strength, and now numbered more than twenty battleships. They received word of the secret rendezvous, and made speed to fulfil their errand. As they did so, Hawke returned to his post. The enemy were gone, and, theoretically, he should have been blinded by the fog of war. But his keen eye had in summer time detected the army's transports, and he flew towards their secret-hiding place with confident sails.

On the twentieth of November, one of the deathless days in British history, he sighted the Brest battleships, and instantly flew the signal to engage. The enemy by instinct knew who it was, and, dropping the invasion scheme incontinently overboard, turned for refuge into Quiberon Bay. They had Breton pilots to steer them in, and the fear of they knew not what behind. The day, which had opened with foul weather, grew worse, and the heavy French vessels lurched through the surges. There were but two or three hours of daylight left; and, as the storm fiends swung and whistled in the rigging, the rearguard began to envy those ahead. Hawke had never for a moment checked his speed; but now the chief navigator approached him and respectfully showed that, unless the British fleet turned about, it would ground itself on the unknown shoals and split itself upon the rocks. "You have done right," said the Admiral, "in warning me of the danger. Now lay me alongside of the enemy!" And in defiance of shoals, and rocks, and darkness, in defiance of the gale and the merciless breakers, he clung to the coat-tails of the flying foe, and striking them dead to right and left, settled himself in a snug anchorage strewn with the wrecks of the battle-fleet destined for the conquest of Britain.

The victory marked the highest achievement of the British navy, but that fact must not be allowed to obscure its proper setting in the history of the world. The invasion scheme, which it covered with ridicule, was the French reply to the British attempt to conquer North America. The work of the sailors who lifted General Wolfe to the heights of Abraham was balanced and completed by the work of the sailors who fought under Hawke at Quiberon Bay.

Only a very short time afterwards King George II. died, and the crown descended to his grandson, a young, obstinate and opinionated monarch, who was destined within a quarter of a century to reverse the verdict of the Year of Victories. In 1763 he brought the war to a close ; and, though he yielded much that England would gladly have kept, he recovered Minorca by a fair exchange, and insisted upon the British dominion in North America. But, unhappily, in his attempt to restore the personal ascendancy of the Crown, he succeeded only in converting himself into a 'Premier' of the pattern fashionable at the moment, when bribery and corruption moulded opinion, and every man had his price. Such methods of government were deplorable enough when an able minister like Walpole presided. They ate like a canker into the vitals of the State when in place of experience came callow youth—youth that could not distinguish between honest opinion and subservient ; between the good man and the sycophant ; between truth and adulation. The government in all its branches became like a tree which outwardly is fair to behold, and inwardly so rotten as to remain standing only for lack of the storm to blow it down. But no department of government was so debilitated as the Admiralty ; for the depravity in Whitehall spread to the dockyards, where it festered into a running sore that sapped the navy of its strength. Not even in early Stuart times was peculation so rampant and embezzlement so rife. The First Lord divided his time between the gaming-table and the political arena. Funds voted for the fleet were deflected by him to party needs or private purposes, and his subordinates at the Navy Office and elsewhere trafficked and bartered with the maritime stores committed to their keeping. Detection was difficult, for on paper the Navy appeared to flourish, and the only men capable of exposing the frauds were bribed from Whitehall to hold their tongues.

All this heinous sin is discounted to-day beside the enormity of George III.'s error in asking the American colonies to help him to defray the cost of a war which the motherland had conducted on their behalf. And yet the sin and the error are

at least as closely related as cause and effect. If George III.'s government had been incorruptible, and if the navy had been kept vigorous instead of being reduced to decrepitude, the United States would not have owed their independence to the intervention of foreign powers. It was the navy that dowered England with the Dominion across the seas, and it was the failure of England to maintain her fleet which robbed her of the means of retaining that Dominion. Two bonds unite England and her Empire together—affection and battleships. George III. had the unique misfortune of simultaneously dissolving both.

His determination to punish the American colonies for their resentment at his interference in their fiscal affairs led to a colonial struggle which began in 1775 and culminated two years later in the surrender at Saratoga. This was the signal for the continental powers to make the American cause their own. France joined in the war against us in 1778, Spain in 1779, and the Dutch in 1780. Revenge was their motive, and the selected hour well chosen.

The amalgamation of all the continental navies threw England back upon home defence in a manner which she had not known since the year of Beachy Head. Her grip on the Mediterranean began at once to falter. Gibraltar was invested both by land and sea; and Minorca, which (we have noted) was recovered after Quiberon Bay, was liable at any moment to be lost as in the days of Byng. And if Great Britain had no longer naval force sufficient to hold her own in the Mediterranean, what chance had she of equipping suitable fleets for West Indian seas, and (above all) for the coasts of North America? All the oceans of the world cried aloud for British ships, and the money granted for them had been spent in political intrigue, while the hearts of oak rotted at their moorings.

The first need of the moment was a naval victory; and in the summer of 1778 Admiral Keppel, the idol of the sailors and a favourite disciple of Hawke, went out to do his best. It was with the utmost difficulty that a fleet could be mobilized at all, and when the ships were ready they fell far short of what the

Admiral required. Always optimistic, however, he made the most of them, and, what is more, located the French fleet though it was scores of miles from land. In Quiberon style he dashed Hawke-wise at it, and with wings spread wide, swooped and turned, and then hovered, poising, ready to strike.

But the French were very different now from what they had been in the Seven Years' War. Realizing that sea-power had robbed them of North America, they had, since Quiberon, assiduously nursed their navy as they had never nursed it before. Every man, woman, and child in the country had been taught to take an interest in it, and personally contribute in some small way to its welfare or its upkeep. Naval warfare was studied in a scientific spirit, hitherto unknown in any realm; and every officer, according to his rank, was tested, not only for valour, but efficiency. The ships were out practising by day and night, in storm and calm. And it is not too much to say that in the pure technique of maritime dexterity and technical evolutions no fleet ever surpassed that which Keppel challenged off Ushant.

As he judiciously hovered for the final swoop, the French fleet, which appeared to be retreating in good order, suddenly swung itself round on its heel (so to speak) and opened fire with all its broadsides. The English ships responded with cordial heat, and the two sides engaged like mediaeval knights tilting in the joust-yard, for the English were advancing in one direction and the French ships in the other. It was not until his adversaries, drawing clear, put their helms up and ran away to leeward that Keppel began to appreciate the trick they had played him. Throughout the engagement they had fired at masts, sails, and rigging, and a battle to the death was now out of the question, for the simple reason that the English ships were too badly mauled to pursue. The English gunnery practice had been beyond all praise, but had not endured sufficiently long to achieve its object. The French, on the other hand, though they suffered heavily in man-power, brought their ships out of action as mobile as when they entered it, and, leaving the lists alone, swaggered off to accomplish their aims elsewhere.

The nature of the new French tactics is still better illustrated by the battle of Grenada, which took place in the following year. On this occasion the British fleet was under another commander of the school of Hawke, Admiral Byron, grandfather of the poet. Hearing that one of the West India Islands was being threatened by the French, he raced to the rescue at the top of his speed; and seeing the enemy, as he supposed, in a disorderly herd, flew Hawke's favourite signal and pounced upon them in a somewhat contemptuous manner. He did not possess any tactical analysis of the battle of Ushant, and was amazed at the exquisite skill with which the French dressed their ranks, lined out, and proceeded to repel him. Once more the two sides played each its own game, with the result that Byron, with ships halt and maimed, hobbled distressfully back to a dockyard, while the French, very much at their convenience, proceeded to subtract Grenada from the British Empire and add it to their own.

This was their guiding principle throughout this vital war: first, with steady gun-practice to hamstring their precipitate opponents, and then, having the seas to themselves, to execute some dramatic coup. Grenada was a small prize. Two years later came the battle of the Chesapeake, which changed the history of the world.

The British headquarters in North America were at New York. Here was the military staff under Sir Henry Clinton, and here lay what may best be described as a "nucleus" fleet; that is to say, a handful of ships, utterly inadequate to safeguard British interests, but capable of taking the field when reinforced by the West India squadron which was obliged to come north during the hurricane season. In 1781 Admiral Graves, being reinforced in this manner, set out for the Chesapeake to co-operate with the British field army, then under Cornwallis in Virginia. At the mouth of the Chesapeake Graves sighted the French, who outnumbered him by nearly five to three. The odds against him made Graves cautious, and he did his utmost to avoid the error into which Keppel and Byron had fallen. But all to no purpose! The French again applied their infallible recipe,

and obliged the British commander to leave the field in order to dock his ships and repair them.

Masters of the situation, and with unimpaired mobility, the enemy hastened into Chesapeake Bay and compelled Cornwallis to surrender.[1] With Graves behind it, the British army at Yorktown would have had the same chance as Moore's army at Coruña, or Wellington's at Torres Vedras. But England, ever slow to recognize her indebtedness to her battleships, had failed to realize that they had won North America ; and so failed to realize that, without a sufficiency of them, well exercised, well maintained, and well commanded, she could not hope to keep it. Nobody to-day hesitates to affirm that the capitulation of Yorktown established the independence of the United States. But nobody to-day can doubt that, if the fleet which fought for Britain at the Chesapeake had been the fleet which won Quebec in 1759, General Washington might well have sighed in vain for deliverance from King George.

In the year following the battle of the Chesapeake the cup of misery was filled to overflowing by the second loss of Minorca. Britain had been evicted from North America, and was now ejected from the Mediterranean. And this time she had no counterbalancing advantage wherewith to redeem her loss.

It was the blackest hour in British history, and the hour when naval neglect, impoverishment, and desuetude had robbed Britannia of her shield.

If the epoch has one redeeming feature it is this : that with armies surrendering, ministers resigning, tide-waiters absconding, and even the Premier-King retiring into obscurity, no admirals were publicly abased or privately butchered by way of expiation for the failure of the people to know the things which belong to their peace.

[1] Even if Sir Henry Clinton had been able to spare from headquarters an army sufficiently strong to relieve Cornwallis, he could only have transferred it from New York to the Chesapeake by the sea-route which Graves had been compelled to abandon.

CHAPTER XIII

THE NEW WAY AND THE OLD

THE naval reverses of the war of American Independence —Ushant, Grenada, and the Chesapeake—were not "defeats" in the sense in which the British admirals administered that discipline. They were not in any degree comparable to Gravelines, the Kentish Knock, La Hogue and Quiberon. Ashore, unfriendly criticism (which had converted Malaga into a "set-back," Toulon into a "disgrace," and Minorca into a "catastrophe") magnified the failures of Keppel, Byron and Graves; but at sea the prevalent feeling was the huntsman's disappointment at losing his quarry after a tiring run. The small casualty lists, which more than half persuaded the folk at home that British sailors were losing their valour, left the sailors themselves in a fury of impotent anger that the elusive "mossoos" (as they called them) were allowed by fate to slip through British fingers.

All the squadrons that left our shores were unduly weak during this flaccid epoch; but the people at home, by their nervous clamour, secured something like effective protection; and the Channel Fleet, having no anxiety about the Rhine delta, had sufficient time to cogitate about the lack of success elsewhere. There was plenty of furious thinking on the part of such men as Jervis and Duncan, destined to be the heroes of the next war, but at this time private captains employed in home defence; and, while different opinions were entertained as to the remedy required, all experts were agreed in their diagnosis. And it was this. The Royal Navy had grown to

manhood and maturity in conflict with the Dutch, who stripped like pugilists, entered whole-heartedly into the ring, and hammered away for round after round until a knock-out blow ended the bout. Trained in such a school, the British had learned to strengthen their arms to deliver hard knocks and their sides to withstand the same. Britannia's ships, the nation sang, were " hearts of oak " ; rising more majestic, the more powerful the lightning stroke ; and rooting themselves more firmly in the deep, the louder the blast of war that tore the sky.

But what avail were qualities like these against a nation like the French who made their assault, not on ships or men, but on motive power—upon masts, sails and rigging ? What was the proper treatment for adversaries who fired from their guns not honest cannon balls, but dumb-bells, sickles, reaping hooks, long bars, shearing tools, scythe blades and scrap-iron ? How chastise opponents who deliberately chose the leeward berth, who opened high-angle fire at extreme range, and galloped away before the wind, leaving orthodox duellists hamstrung ? These were the questions that awaited reply, and it was Kempenfelt who answered them.

Kempenfelt was, during the greater part of the war of American Independence, chief of staff to the several admirals who commanded the Grand Fleet. If he differed from other naval officers of the time, he differed only in the extent to which he studied books as well as men. He had a good knowledge of French, and left no maritime treatise from the other side of the Channel neglected or unread. He cannot be called the " Lawgiver of the Navy," because the Admiralty alone could issue edicts ; but his clever letters carried the impress of wisdom, and the Admiralty gave effect to such of his recommendations as they could reconcile with British tradition.

In its essence, Kempenfelt's advice was to meet guile with guile, and subtlety with subtlety ; to counter the French evolutions with evolutions less intricate and more efficacious ; to outplay their cunning with greater cunning ; to retain the hardhitting which was the inheritance of Drake and Blake

but to season it with artifice and garnish it with finesse. In the abstract, such reasoning would seem to suggest that British admirals should rely less upon physical power and more upon intellectual; and Kempenfelt's critics within the fleet were wont to enquire of him how he would insure that all naval officers would (in the crisis of battle) work with their head. Kempenfelt replied that all naval officers already did so, but that they failed because they could not transfer their thoughts beyond the bulwarks of their own ship.

To illustrate what he meant, we may refer to an early engagement with the French—the battle of Toulon, which led to the ruin of Admiral Mathews. At the outset of this battle the three English squadrons were not in one and the same straight line. The right wing, if we may so describe it, was several miles to rearward of the commander-in-chief's station. Admiral Mathews was anxious to attack at once, and attack with all his force. His first duty, then, was to dress his line, or bring his right wing into position. To accomplish this he did two things: he shortened sail in his own squadron, so as to stand by or mark time, and he hoisted a white flag at his ensign staff, a prearranged signal (allowed by the Admiralty) which signified "the right wing will make all possible sail in order to reach the front." But the admiral commanding the right wing, instead of hastening to his assistance, took deliberate pains to stay where he was, and those who live after Kempenfelt's day find it difficult to forgive him. But the amazing story only confirms what Kempenfelt insisted upon, namely, that the admiral commanding-in-chief was powerless to transmit his brain-waves beyond the boundaries of his own ship.

The admiral commanding the right wing at the battle of Toulon watched the fleet-flagship with care and attention. He saw the white flag at the ensign staff, and knew the significance attaching to it; but he also saw that Mathews was shortening sail; and he found it difficult to piece these two tokens together and reconcile their divergent meaning. The enemy's fleet was hurrying away, and yet the commander-in-chief was decreasing his speed. The enemy's fleet was with-

drawing from opposite the English front, and yet the commander-in-chief appeared to say, "Come up on my right." If the battle had been fought against the Dutch no difficulty would have arisen, because the Dutch would not have hurried away and the English front could have been corrected at leisure. If the battle had taken place on shore no difficulty would have arisen, because an aide-de-camp would, in a matter of minutes, have covered the distance between the centre and right wing. But the combination of white flag at the ensign staff and the reefing of topsails, which to Mathews so obviously meant "Come on quick! Don't you see I am waiting for you?" to his subordinate conveyed nothing but a perplexing contradiction, "Join me quickly! But reduce your speed!"

In reaching a decision how to act, the admiral commanding the right wing was guided by a principle which had served its purpose since the days of Drake, which had been sanctioned by Admiralty endorsement, and still had much to be said for it: "If you are doubtful what to do, you will not be far wrong, if you imitate the commander-in-chief!" Admiral Mathews was shortening sail. Therefore his subordinate did the same. Admiral Mathews, if his voice would have carried so far, would have shouted, "I can do nothing till you join me"; and for answer his subordinate came to a stop, just as if he contemplated desertion. Most of the troubles between man and man are brought about by misunderstandings, and so it was at the battle of Toulon.

This inability of a commander-in-chief at sea to make his wishes known at three or four miles' visible distance was the handicap which Admiral Kempenfelt made up his mind to remove. The mischief was rooted, he thought, in the navy's time-honoured plan of attaching to every flag in use some definite specified meaning. Thus, a red flag at the fore meant "Engage the enemy!"; a flag half blue and half white meant "Engage the enemy more closely!"; a white flag with a red cross, "General chase!"; and a chess-board pattern in blue and yellow, "Discontinue the action!"

Kempenfelt insisted that flags used in this way were like

the hieroglyphic writing of the ancient Egyptians, or the picture language of the Aztecs. Sometimes the meaning was obvious enough, more often it was intelligible only to those who invented it. A "bee" and a "leaf," pictorially represented, might convey to clever people "Belief"; but what would happen if ordinary men mistook the "bee" for a "fly" and the "leaf" for a "boat"? What was wanted at sea, he kept asserting, was not hieroglyphics but language; not puzzles, but speech. He did not recommend alphabetical flags, because spelling would consume too much time. A more workmanlike method could be evolved from the adoption of ten flags for the digits and a brief dictionary or phrase-book in which the words were all numbered, and the alphabet included also (in case something had to be spelled). Then, with two-flag hoists, the navy would possess a language of ninety-nine words; with three flag hoists, a language of nine hundred and ninety-nine words; and ships would be able to talk to one another almost as easily as individuals ashore.

The nature of the change which Kempenfelt advocated may best be seen by comparing what happened at Toulon with what happened at Trafalgar. On both occasions flags were hoisted, fluttered for a space, and were hauled down to make room for others. At Toulon preconcerted messages were sent, and despite the care expended on them were misunderstood. At Trafalgar Nelson talked rapidly to his fleet like this:—

Euryalus' Pendant; 213
76
82
307
253, 269, 863, 261, 471, 958, 220, 370, 4, 21, 19, 24.
63
16.

Which, being interpreted, means:—

"Captain Henry Blackwood of the *Euryalus* to come on board the *Victory*.

Bear up and steer large on the course steered by the Admiral.

Alter course one point to starboard.

Make all sail possible with safety to your masts.

England expects that every man will do his duty. (DUTY had to be spelled.)

Prepare to anchor at the close of the day.

Engage the enemy more closely."

And this was only a very small part of the orders given, and instantly understood.

Kempenfelt encountered the customary obstacles that are raised by men and institutions of conservative habit, and in consequence he was not able in his own lifetime to carry his reforms as far as he would have liked. But his *Primer of Speech for Fighting Ships*, generally referred to unpretentiously as the first "Signal Book," bridges the chasm that separates the old navy from the navy of Nelson, and constitutes a revolution which (for far-reaching effects) will challenge comparison with the adoption by the navy of heavy artillery in the age of Drake.

The "Signal Book" was ready in 1782, and was almost immediately put to the proof.

It has been seen on a previous page that, in this fateful year, the enemies of England had for the second time recaptured Minorca, and now in consequence their hopes ran high of reducing Gibraltar also. Twice already the navy had succoured the place; but the endurance of the garrison could not continue indefinitely, and it was resolved to send the Grand Fleet under Lord Howe to effect the Rock's relief. The commander-in-chief hoisted his flag in the *Victory*; and round this remarkable vessel gathered a wonderful assemblage of transports, storeships and merchantmen, numbering in all no less than 183 sail.

Preparations, naturally enough, assumed an unprecedented scale; and, while they were in progress at Portsmouth, there occurred one of the saddest and most tragic events in the navy's history. The historic ship, the *Royal George*, which had carried Hawke into battle at Quiberon Bay, was being heeled over, so that her under-water timbers could receive attention. The angle of inclination was slight, and in no way incommoded the nine hundred souls then on board.

ONE OF NELSON'S SAILORS

Note the Grog-bowl and Churchwarden pipe of the period. From an unpublished drawing by T. Rowlandson. (About 1800.)

(*By kind permission of Commander C. N. Robinson, R.N.*)

Admiral Kempenfelt was at work in his cabin, pen in hand, looking forward, no doubt, to seeing whether his "Signal Book" could effect the salvation of Gibraltar. Suddenly those on board heard a sickening crack or rent, as if the hull by some mighty unseen force had been crushed like an eggshell in a man's hand. Orders were instantly given to right the ship, and without a vestige of panic the men ran to obey. But before anything could be done the *Royal George* sank like a leaden coffin into the deep, carrying the Admiral and nearly all of his company to a watery grave, within sight of thousands who could do nothing to effect a rescue.

The tragedy sent a thrill of horror throughout the land, and before very long Cowper's solemn monody, *Toll for the Brave*, was tugging at men's heartstrings and inducing all the charitable to contribute generously to a fund for the widows and children. But what would the world have said if it had been generally known that the simple-minded poet was talking nonsense, and screening by means of his immortal poem the wrongs of a service which else would have cried to heaven for vengeance? "A land breeze shook the shrouds," he wrote of the ship which at Quiberon had defied the tempest throes! "A land breeze shook the shrouds; and she was overset"!

The court-martial which sat at Portsmouth examined all the survivors, and found themselves at variance with the poet when he said that the *Royal George* was perfectly sound in her timbers and "sprang no fatal leak." They agreed unanimously that she had been so long neglected that decay had eaten deep into her vitals, and that, on the day of the fatality, the under-water parts of the *Royal George* had literally dropped from under her. In a word, Kempenfelt and his gallant fellows were the victims of that corrupt administration which had lately also forfeited North America.

The verdict of the court-martial was considered too incriminating to be disclosed, and the minutes of the enquiry and other secret documents were by the government deliberately suppressed. This, perhaps, was not unreasonable, for the Board of Admiralty, which received the report, had not been

in office during Lord Sandwich's guilty term; and though the scandal, if revealed, might have warned future generations of the suicidal policy of economising on the navy, yet the pressure of thought was not for the future, but for the instant needs of the present; and the revelation of official misconduct would not prevent the remnants of Empire from being submerged like the unhappy ship.

On 11th September Lord Howe set sail to relieve Gibraltar, clutching the only talisman which could help him to effect his purpose—the Signal Book which had come into the world under such inauspicious stars. The task before him was of the kind which has so often proved fatal to those attempting it. He had, like Medina Sidonia in 1588, and like Conflans in 1759, to convey over sea an unwieldy and unmanageable drove of merchantmen, and see that the soldiers, ammunitions and stores they carried were disembarked at one particular chosen spot without delay, without mishap, and in the face of hostile fleets which (at the point of disembarkation) waited eagerly to destroy them. As recently as 1781, in a victory which would have immortalized lesser navies, and which Britons have entirely forgotten, Admiral Kempenfelt had overthrown just such a composite force as it set out from France for America.[1]

Lord Howe proceeded at a snail's pace, to suit the slowest of his heavy-footed herd; and with flags ever a-flutter, and "Signal Book" open, he shepherded his relief force with a perfection of management which would have amazed sea-commanders of pre-Kempenfelt days. It is impossible here to do justice to the story. Suffice it to say that he arrived at the Straits to find the enemy in possession, jockeyed them by cunning out of the way, put himself between them and his merchantmen, shielded the convoy while they unloaded, evacuated the Bay once more, flung the enemy for a second time from his path, sheltered the empty merchantmen as,

[1] On 12th December Kempenfelt, with twelve of the line, sighted off Ushant a French fleet of nineteen battleships containing an army intended for the conquest of Jamaica. Outplaying his adversary by skill and address, Kempenfelt captured twenty troop-ships and so wrecked the entire expedition.

with task completed, they ran for home, and then with a sort of sigh of relief, turned himself to the appetizing task of thrashing the combined fleets of France and Spain at the battle of Cape Spartel. Everywhere but in England the achievement was acclaimed as a masterpiece. But Lord Howe waived the alien plaudits aside ; and when chivalrous enemies grew warm in their praise of his accurate judgment, his quick perception, and the rapidity of his decisions, he nodded his head, and gave Heaven thanks that the " Signal Book " had proved a success. The martyred Kempenfelt was justified, and the war might yet be won.

The stir of optimism among naval officers is very evident at this time ; and the proposal of the government to grant independence to the American colonies was condemned afloat with an emphatic unanimity which would have done Chatham's heart good if he had lived to see the relief of Gibraltar. And Lord Howe was not the only hero of 1782. News of an even greater success had come from a quarter where the " Signal Book " was unknown.

In secret conference with their American allies, the French had decided to reimburse themselves for their war expenditure by the conquest of the British possessions in the West Indies. We have seen on a previous page how they took Grenada, and how admirably suited were their methods of fighting at sea to the acquisition of territory. By the spring of 1782 they had despoiled the British Empire of the following islands in addition to Grenada :—Tobago, Dominica, St. Kitts, the Grenadines, St. Vincent, St. Eustatius, Nevis and Montserrat. In 1782, in collusion with the Spaniards, they decided upon the conquest of Jamaica. There were still one or two other small islands to collect ; but the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown heralded the end of the war, and they thought it well to push forward their more ambitious project lest the British suddenly cried out for peace. In February, 1782, they must be thought of, then, as completing their preparations in the harbour of Fort Royal, Martinique.

In that same month there arrived from England a welcome rescue party. The commander-in-chief was Sir George

Rodney, for whom the British Empire cherishes to this hour sentiments of profound gratitude. The Admiral had already distinguished himself in the most signal fashion by destroying the Spanish fleet off St. Vincent in January, 1780; and, during an earlier chapter of the siege, by relieving the garrison at Gibraltar. And not less effective had been his interposition in West Indian affairs; for he it was who had induced the government to provide British ships with a base in those waters, commensurate in its importance with British interests there. It was too late, of course, after the outbreak of hostilities to find and fortify the best harbour in West Indian seas; but all the more credit to Rodney for evolving a scheme which overrode his countrymen's unique talent for deferring naval needs until too late. What he had proposed was that a descent should be made upon what we call to-day Castries in the Island of St. Lucia. Fortified by the finest French engineers, it was regarded as impregnable; but Rodney thought that the British would be able to take it much as they had taken Gibraltar in 1704, and having taken it would be able to hold it against all comers. In both premises he proved entirely correct: for a naval expedition under Admiral Barrington had taken the place almost as soon as France joined the Americans; and the only island, which throughout the war remained impervious to the French, was the one upon which they themselves had lavished their own skill in fortification.

To his own chosen base in West Indian seas came Rodney in 1782 to lift again the banner of Britain. Shortly after his arrival the French under de Grasse set out for the conquest of Jamaica. Without the loss of a moment Rodney was on their traces; and, with the dogged persistence of one who had served his apprenticeship under Hawke, he carried his fleet in pursuit of the enemy. The French were skirting the chain of the Lesser Antilles; and when they approached Guadeloupe and were over against a group of islets christened by Columbus "The Saints," it became obvious to them that they would not be able to escape without a battle. They had no wish to fight, because they were already committed to an invasion scheme. But Rodney's precipitancy had

upset their calculations; and, dismissing their convoy, they prepared to cripple him as they had crippled Keppel, Byron and Graves.

Both fleets had been running on parallel lines to the northward; but de Grasse, handling his plastic line just as adroitly as his predecessors, flung himself suddenly upon the opposite tack, and came southward to meet his assailants. Thus the battle of the Saints opened exactly as the battle of Ushant had done.

Rodney, it cannot too often be said, was a commander of the old school; that is to say, he knew nothing of the invaluable "Signal Book," and was not otherwise equipped than Keppel, Byron and Graves, except in that indefinable something which men call genius. With a grand eye for a maritime battlefield, he watched the action proceed, waiting for the opportunity which most men receive at least once in their lives, and which great men never neglect. Like a bolt from the blue it came. The wind was easterly and the French were nearer to it than himself. But as they sidled past him, and he scrutinized their array to discover a vulnerable joint, he saw the weather vanes at the masthead suddenly pivot round to south-east. Out of such little things great decisions are made. With the wind as it was when the battle began, Rodney was obliged to go north; but after the change he could steer E.N.E., and a course set in that direction intersected the line of the French advance. Without a second's hesitation Rodney jammed down his helm; and his ship the *Formidable*, as if she understood exactly what he meant, broke through the French line just abaft the centre division. Admiral Hood, bringing up the British rear, acted in fine emulation of his commander-in-chief, and sliced through at a second fissure just abaft the enemy's van. In that moment the French ceased to be a line of battle, and became three dislocated fractions. All their morale at once broke down, and the British gunnery wrought dreadful havoc. The victory was as complete as Quiberon Bay. De Grasse and his splendid flagship the *Ville de Paris* were captured on the battlefield; and of the remainder of the French ships, those that were not

sunk or captured fled, without semblance of anything but flight, in disintegrated consternation.

Few British battles at sea escape the censure of the British, and armchair critics have not hesitated to say that it was fortunate for Rodney that the wind changed. The implication is that the Admiral otherwise would have suffered a reverse like Byron and Graves. But this surely is to wrong him unduly. Rodney had already proved himself, at St. Vincent and elsewhere, one of the foremost sea commanders of all time; and if conjecture does not ignore his past, it should be exercised in discovering what other tricks he had up his sleeve, supposing that the wind had been constant. Inability in other persons to find a solution of the puzzle is no proof that Rodney won by mere chance.

If the battle of the Saints will bear comparison with Quiberon in its decisiveness, it may stand beside any recorded victory in the nature of its results. Not only did it save Jamaica, but it saved the West Indies. The long chain of islands which, with so much pains and so much labour, the French had accumulated, now returned again to their original owners. And the moral, surely, is difficult to miss. Each belligerent in turn enjoyed command of the sea, and concurrently enjoyed possession of the Antilles; and each belligerent, when forfeiting command of the sea, yielded its oceanic empire in a manner almost automatic. Such a reflection need not disturb the complacency of continental states or militaristic dynasties; but it cannot appear otherwise than profoundly disquieting to a league of self-governing Dominions whose bonds are maritime.

Two other comments are invited by the battle of the Saints. Viewed against the receding background of shame, surrender and disillusion, the victory teaches Britain to shun despair so long as her battleships still float and still are undefeated; and viewed against the dawning epoch of scientific signalling, it teaches that an obsolete system in the hands of a genius may prove more potent than the latest invention in the hands of ordinary men.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

THE reverses suffered by the Royal Navy during the war of American Independence acted not merely as a stimulus to the higher command, but as a tonic to the higher administrative body on which the fleet depended for sustenance. The dockyards and victualling-yards were overhauled, and to all practical purposes refashioned and rebuilt. The walls were repaired and heightened, and trustworthy guards set at every gate. Stocktaking was instituted, inspections made frequent and systematic. The rope-walks, sail-lofts, anchor-walks, and bakehouses were made secure against theft and embezzlement, and stores were controlled by the issue of checks and counterfoils. In a material sense the navy began to prosper as it had not done since the days of the Commonwealth, and the equipment of a battlefleet ceased to be a labour of Hercules and became a simple matter of routine.

There is a widespread belief that this welcome consummation should be attributed to the personal agency of William Pitt. But for such a belief there would appear to be little or no foundation. Like so many of his countrymen, the young Premier of 1784 did not understand or appreciate the sea-service, or not until the cataclysm in France awakened his interest. Most of the present dockyard buildings seem to have been completed in the year in which he first assumed office, and therefore must have been sanctioned while the American war was still in progress, and while money for the

fighting services was granted without question. In 1778, the year in which the French took up arms against us, the naval votes amounted to £875,000; in the year in which Pitt came into power they had risen to upwards of two millions. It was perhaps inevitable that the apostle of economy should at the close of a war insist upon naval reductions; but, if he cannot be credited with the maritime sense of the Tudor kings, he did not incur the reproach attaching to his predecessors, and the moral tone of his famous administration is guarantee sufficient that the money voted for the upkeep of the fleet was used for the purpose which Parliament intended.

When, therefore, the French Revolution broke out only a few short years after Rodney's victory at the Saints, the Royal Navy was, in a material sense, as sound and wholesome as the emergency demanded. The ships were ready to take the sea at a moment's notice; and the yards, roomier and more accommodating than they had ever been before, were prepared to cope expeditiously with any reasonable requirement. Such improvement could not by itself ensure success in naval operations, but it afforded the essential foundation on which to work; and the same cause which produced it had produced also a corps of officers unmatched in excellence and professional knowledge. Howe, Hood, Jervis, Duncan, Collingwood, Saumarez and Nelson had all been tried and tested in the bitter experience of the American war, and craved the opportunity of showing what could be done under conditions favourable to the proper handling of fleets.

So it came about that, when Great Britain at last decided to make war upon the French Revolution, she did so under auspices of happy import. For the first time, it may be said, since the time of Drake, this country signalized her intervention in a great European conflict by a sweeping victory at sea. The main fleet guarding these shores was under Lord Howe, and in the summer of 1794 this silent and reliable commander brought the French fleet to action in the wide Atlantic three hundred miles to the westward of Brest. The skill with which he tracked his adversaries, whose task it was to meet and escort a convoy of corn-ships from America;

Lord Howe

From the portrait by Thomas Gainsborough at Gopsall Hall

the persistence with which he dogged them day after day, defeating their strenuous efforts to escape; the masterly skill with which he cut through their line, in spite of weather foul enough to ruin far simpler evolutions; all these proofs of genius deserve full description, and should be examined in the longer histories. At length, after four long days of strenuous campaigning, Lord Howe had his foes placed as he wanted them, and his own ships ranged opposite on a parallel line. The crisis of the struggle now awaited his solution. He had before him adversaries, less clever perhaps than those he had met in the American war,[1] but adversaries, as at Minorca, Ushant, and the Chesapeake, just as intent on disabling the British fleet while it ran down upon them, and then themselves vacating the field. Lord Howe had already made use of Rodney's manœuvre, and had cut through their midst to secure the wind. This thrust enabled him to keep them in sight, and choose his own moment of attack. He now had a fresh surprise in store. When he flew his flag for battle, his ships, instead of closing the range bows-on, and withholding their fire until they were near enough to make a right-angled turn and deliver their broadsides, withheld their fire until further orders, and racing down upon the foe before the favourable wind, charged, each for each, at the water-gaps between every two vessels in the long French line. Lord Howe's intention was to break his antagonist's backbone, not with a couple of fractures, but with almost as many fractures as there were vertebrae composing it.

With his beloved "Signal Book" to help him, as it had done on the four preceding days, he put his plan into execution with a measure of success which broke the French symmetrical array into floundering fragments. Despite magnificent efforts on the part of the *Mountain* and the *Jacobin*, Lord Howe in the *Queen Charlotte* hacked a way through himself, and in at least five other places the enemy's line was pierced. The result was a mêlée, in which the independent valour of individual English ships found itself no longer opposed

[1] The French navy had been robbed of many of its best officers by the guillotine.

by the combination and team-work in which the Frenchmen excelled. Moreover, the *Queen Charlotte*, and such of her consorts as succeeded in breaking through, planted themselves with deft dexterity on the path of the enemy's usual route for withdrawal, and in so doing denied them the chance of escape. If the French line had been broken at every point, Lord Howe would probably have had as many prizes as his adversary had ships. As it was, he accounted for nearly a quarter of the force opposed to him, and the brilliance of the victory was notably enhanced by the bravery and skill of the vanquished. There was no dishonour attaching to anyone for a defeat by such a master of naval tactics as Lord Howe ; and it was in keeping with the modesty of the victor that he uttered no protest when his incorrigible countrymen christened his five days' battle " The Glorious First of June."

No admiral was ever more completely the idol of the lower deck than " Black Dick," by which affectionate nickname his worshippers referred to him ; and never did British seamen fight better than under his leadership at this the first battle against the French Revolution. Lovers of the incongruous might indeed look far before they discovered a stronger contrast than that afforded by the Jacobin crews, with their caps of Liberty, working their guns under the shadow cast by a model of the Guillotine, and the simple sailors of Lord Howe with their lusty, ringing cheers for the King. It would have been difficult in 1794 to believe that it was on the fighting decks of our men-of-war that the doctrines of the French Revolution were to find their likeliest seed-plot. And yet so it was. Within three years of Lord Howe's great anti-Jacobin victory the safety of this country was undermined as it had never been before by the " Mutiny of the Fleet."

No greater mistake could be made than to suppose that there was some special set of reasons that led to the outbreak. The causes of the mutiny were all of them at least a century old, and they may be classified under the three main headings of pay, food and recruitment.

In 1649 Robert Blake persuaded Parliament to pay nine-

teen shillings a month to an ordinary seaman and twenty-two shillings and sixpence to an able seaman. No change had been made since ; not a penny had been added to either sum, although the price of living had risen thirty per cent., and wages ashore, including army pay, had been raised proportionately. And the conditions which had paved the way to the mutiny of Charles II.'s time, when the seamen led de Ruyter up the Medway, still prevailed. The men were still kept waiting, not merely from month to month, but from year to year, for what was due to them. No advance was made until a ship concluded her commission and was " paid off." The nation's chief creditors, if they had survived the perils of shipwreck and tempest, had then to prove their title to what they claimed ; and, if successful, received a cheque which they could only convert into cash at the Navy Pay Office. In Pepys's day the mutiny had been occasioned by the absence of money when the cheques were presented. The recurrence of a similar scandal had been happily avoided, but in all other respects the vile and dishonourable old régime continued ; and not the smallest recognition was paid to the fact that sailors had homes and wives and families needing support while the wage-earner was at sea.

In the matter of pay the lower deck had found no effective champion since Robert Blake ; the same was true in the matter of food. There had been no improvement in a hundred years, no kind of amelioration. The difficulty of carrying fresh food at sea was duly recognised, and the eighteenth century had not been remarkable for the discovery of preservatives. But there were three reforms which had long been demanded, and for an equal length of time ignored. The inroads of scurvy, caused by lack of fresh food, could have been avoided by the issue of lime-juice and other anti-scorbutics ; the biscuit and " salt-horse " inevitable upon a cruise could have been replaced by a fresh-food diet while a ship was in harbour ; and the daily rations could have been issued in full, instead of six to a mess of eight or eight to a mess of ten—a traditional practice prompted by motives of economy. These changes, if the desire for them had been more widely

known, would probably have appeared as reasonable to the citizens of London as to the men of the lower deck. It was the ignorance of landsmen in all appertaining to the sea-service which stereotyped such hardships.

And yet this argument can hardly be advanced either to explain or to extenuate the abuses attendant on manning the fleet. Nothing is more amazing in the history of the greatest maritime state in the world than our failure, until the nineteenth century, to provide men to handle the sails and work the guns. The glaring anomaly can be explained if we push our enquiry far enough back. It grew out of the system whereby our mediaeval kings distrained upon the merchant service for all their maritime needs. This system, as we have seen, survived the changes of the Tudor kings, and it was not until the time of Blake that merchantmen dropped out of the line of battle. If the Commonwealth experiment had been prolonged some solution of a very difficult problem might have been evolved. As it was, by the Restoration settlement the vessels of the mercantile marine were discarded, but the services of its personnel were retained. In theory, when Great Britain was at war, the responsibility for the safety of her shores rested upon the shoulders of the only professional seamen she possessed, namely, the men of the merchant service; and these were expected (again in theory) to troop forward and man the state-owned battleships until the danger of war was passed. In practice, nothing of the sort occurred; and Parliament, too indolent to bother itself, sanctioned the employment of the press-gang. The iniquities of this institution are well known, and have been sufficiently ventilated in novels and upon the stage. Properly speaking, the "gang" hunted none but seamen; and the bulk of its work was certainly done afloat, where it rounded up the home-returning merchantmen. From these it extracted ready-made seamen who were earning three or four pounds a month, and compelled them to risk their lives daily for a beggarly pittance, discharged, after long delay, in the form of paper. No stronger evidence could be adduced to prove the public apathy in regard to the fleet than the survival of a

system so utterly antagonistic to any ordinary sense of fair play.

Even with the aid of the press-gang it was always difficult to secure a ship's complement, and use was therefore made of various auxiliary devices, to which Parliament contributed what was known as the Quota. This was an Act compelling all local authorities to make provision for the manning of the fleet. In counties the sheriffs, and in boroughs the mayors were under a standing obligation to find suitable recruits in number proportional to the extent of their jurisdiction. Under ideal conditions such a system would have been open to criticism; in workaday practice what the local authorities invariably did was to meet their obligation under the Act by a summary process of gaol-delivery. They used the Royal Navy as a convenient penitentiary, and packed off to it, without official qualms, all the undesirable personages in their district.

So slight were the offences which in the eighteenth century might lodge a man in prison, and so iron was the discipline enforced afloat, that the fleet can hardly be said in normal times to have suffered unduly from this hateful process. But in the days of Horne Tooke and Wolfe Tone, times were very far from being normal; and the local authorities were thankful enough to include in their Quota excited agitators, who (in modern phrase) declined to submit to police regulations. These outcasts, being by mechanical process converted into foremast hands, found in the forecastles of the British fleet attentive enough audiences when they "yarned to their mates" what Rousseau had taught about the equality of man; and when they asserted, with the ardour of whole-hearted conviction, that every jack-tar, regardless of birth, colour, or religion, was possessed of sacred and inalienable rights. Such talk might have been indulged in ashore without much danger to the "land of liberty"; but when gifted speakers, snatched from the comforts of home, were confronted with the grinding servitude of the fleet, they had an audience who for a century had awaited their advent, a world in chains which sighed for redemption. The message of the

French Revolution, the gospel of hope for the downcast, of freedom for the oppressed, of wages for the toiler and food for the hungry, went straight home to the brain and the heart of a service which had been treated by those for whom it laboured with hardly more kindness, with hardly more consideration, than the much-pitied peasants of France.

The earlier mutiny of 1667 proclaimed that the time had come when conditions should be made sufficiently humane to attract to the navy adequate numbers of the seafaring folk, who from time immemorial had been the backbone of the realm. So far, however, was this from being recognized, that Parliament condoned the sins of the old régime; because the old régime afforded the easiest path to demobilization, when a national peril was replaced by a national cry for economy. Not one seaman in three hundred under the old régime returned to the service when his ship was paid off.

If, under a system of voluntary enlistment, food had been good and wages punctual, there would have been no mutiny of the fleet in 1797. As it was, the unseen leaven of revolutionary ideas brought about a general uprising at the precise moment when the country most needed that its sailors should be loyal.

To make this truth apparent, it will be necessary to turn aside for a moment to review the progress of the war upon the continent.

There were two main causes which induced Great Britain to take up arms against the French Revolution. In the first place, the English people regarded their own institutions as the bulwarks of political liberty; and across the Channel no outrage seemed too violent, so long as it was directed against what Britons most esteemed. But antipathy, however deep-rooted, is a very different thing from actual hostilities, and it needed something more than her domestic excesses to bring France within reach of a declaration of war. In 1792, however, having routed her royalist invaders, she became arrogant and overweening, and she decided, as in the days of Louis XIV., to annex the southern half of the Rhine delta and make Antwerp her ocean-gate to a new world of prosperity.

This was a violation of international pledges, and England in 1793 joined the First Coalition, which included Austria, Prussia, Holland, Spain, Sardinia and Portugal. Once more the British armies found themselves with their old allies on their ancient battle-ground, and the success or failure of the French Revolution was seen to depend upon the capacity of its leaders to oppose without help all the powers of Western Europe.

In 1793 the French horizon looked ominously black; but in the following year—the year of Lord Howe's great victory—the armies of France carried all before them in the delta. The British and their allies were gravely defeated at Turcoing, and the overthrow of the Austrian cause on the decisive field of Fleurus cleared the last obstacle that kept the Jacobin armies from the Rhine. In the following year Spain and Prussia retired from the war, and the British soldiers were withdrawn from the Continent. Holland, the last buttress of the Delta lands, was conquered and converted into the Batavian Republic, and by an ignominious treaty agreed to a French proposal to open the Scheldt. Thus England, after struggling for two and a half centuries to avert such a disaster, had the mortification of seeing Antwerp pass to a first-class continental power.

She was prepared to fight for a score of years rather than submit to such a fatality; but, when 1796 dawned, she could look for help only to Sardinia and Austria. The situation now resolved itself into a repetition of that which developed when Admiral Mathews commanded in the Mediterranean in 1744; for the fickle Spaniards joined the French, and the French resolved to attack Austria in her Italian provinces.

The British fleet was ready as in 1744 to stop a water-borne Armada; but in 1796 came the young General Buonaparte, who overcoming difficulties which had puzzled the most experienced field-marshal, and leaping over mountains as if they had been molehcaps, defeated the Sardinians, and in a dazzling series of victories brought Austria to her knees.

In 1797 the French Revolution had been justified by the

triumph of the Revolutionary armies; and before the tremendous figure of triumphant Jacobinism, so tall in stature that it thought to puff out the stars, England alone refused to bow the knee.

Such was the moment, tense with dramatic possibilities, in which the seamen of the Royal Navy came out on strike.

The Grand Fleet, based on Portsmouth, assumed from the first quite a Parisian tone. After the officers, like emigrés, had been banished ashore or confined to their own quarters, a "General Assembly" was convened, to which all the ships, like self-governing communes, were invited to send delegates. Parliamentary procedure was faithfully followed, exemplary discipline preserved, and a charter of liberties drawn up. Inalienable rights found eloquent expression, and long-standing grievances their demand for redress. A red flag was flown to show that British sailors were ready to fight for their rights; and the General Assembly made it abundantly clear that, until old abuses were corrected or removed, not a ship would put to sea.

Meanwhile the French were well advanced with an ambitious scheme for the overthrow of their hereditary enemy. They were now united with the Dutch and Spaniards, and had two additional navies to draw upon. Strategically their plan took the shape of a triple naval assault upon Britain; the French fleet forming the centre of the phalanx, the Dutch the right, and the Spaniards the left. The menace was without question the most terrible with which this country had ever been confronted.

The threat developed and first came to a head on the left or Spanish wing. Here Admiral Sir John Jervis, the martinet of the fleet, maintained his sleepless watch. On the famous fourteenth of February, St. Valentine's day, he sighted hostile ships. "There are eight sail of the line!" it was reported; and Sir John, who had fifteen, smiled benignantly; but the numbers grew. "There are twenty sail of the line, Sir John!" "Very well, sir!" "There are twenty-five sail of the line, Sir John!" "Very well, sir." "There are twenty-seven sail of the line, Sir John!"

The enemy outnumbered him by two to one.

A momentous decision lay before him. There was still time to withdraw. But retirement was the last thing "Old Jarvie" thought of. Murmuring to himself, "A victory is very essential to England at this moment," he accepted the supreme hazard; and with a fleet, tempered by himself to the suppleness of a rapier, he lunged through the enemy's fleet.

The Spaniards when sighted were making for Cadiz, and were quite unprepared for the emergency. Their ships were clustered in a mass, as the French had been when Byron attacked at Grenada. But on this occasion the initiative was with the thrice-tried battleships of Britain, battleships commanded by such captains as Troubridge, Collingwood and Nelson. The Spanish commander, before he had time to recover his breath, found his magnificent fleet severed into two disconnected fragments, a larger contingent of eighteen ships and a smaller contingent of nine. The wind was blowing from the west; and Jervis, devoting his attention to the westerly fragment, left the smaller contingent quite out of the fight. Even after such a masterly manœuvre he was still matched with adversaries more numerous than himself; and, to prevent the eighteen from running off the wind and joining the dismembered nine, he kept his own ships like a wall in front of them. As Sir John was sailing south, the Spaniards turned north, making trial of a time-honoured method of evasion. To disappoint them Sir John signalled Troubridge, who led the line, to turn north as soon as he was clear; and, as the battle developed, the British fleet assumed at Jervis's nod the form of the capital letter J, with the Spaniards in the crook.

If the conflict could have been indefinitely continued in this way Jervis would have asked for nothing better; but as the tail of the British line drew southward, it removed the ships which held the Spanish head in chancery, and the Spanish in this part of the field flung honour to the winds and stood not upon the order of their going. Then it was that Nelson found his life's opportunity. Like the laws of Medes and

Persians, which alter not, stood the Admiralty edict that, in the hour of battle, no private ship unbidden should leave her place. Yet Nelson, without a moment's hesitation, swung out of the line, and precipitated himself in front of the would-be fugitives, exposing himself before help could reach him to the combined assault of seven foes. Needless to say, his ship was almost knocked to pieces; but he accomplished exactly what Jervis most required, and, equally needless to say, the martinet of the fleet forgave him his technical trespass. "Forgave him," indeed, is an expression something lacking in warmth. Publicly, at close of day, upon his own quarter-deck, this stickler for unswerving obedience to the jots and tittles of the law took Nelson in his arms and hugged him.

The unpremeditated lightning-flash revealed the master of naval warfare, and put quite a new complexion on the engagement; for the Spaniards, huddled in a bunch where they had discerned an exit, were paralyzed, and in this condition received the full fury of the British onslaught. Jervis, in the *Victory*, delivered trenchant blows and captured a prize. Collingwood, the hardest hitter in the fleet, captured two; and Nelson, with his own ship little better than a wreck, captured the *San Nicolas* and the *San Josef*. The first he took by process of boarding, projecting himself like a human missile through the stern windows of the astonished Spaniards, who, as they surrendered their swords, gazed upon him as upon a portent. And then from the enemy's deck he passed in his meteoric career to the conquest of one of the biggest vessels afloat. Securely he shackled his two prizes, and when the rest of the fleet saw what he had done, they greeted him with ringing cheers; and the lower deck promptly dubbed the episode "Nelson's patent bridge for boarding First Rates."

But what distinguished the battle of St. Vincent above all British sea-victories was its timeliness. Well might King George confer an earldom on Jervis, and raise Commodore Nelson to the rank of Admiral with the Order of the Bath upon his breast. Not only was Great Britain saved from the terrors of Jacobinism and the fear of invasion, but she was

saved from her ever-present peril of depreciating her sailors. Old Jarvie's "Valentine" put men in the proper mood for considering the rights and wrongs of the mutiny at Spithead.

The moderation of the delegates and the correct attitude of the "General Assembly" should have entitled the sailors in any case to a respectful hearing. But the dilatoriness of Parliament exasperated those who had tried hard to be business-like; and an unwise disposition on the part of the government to treat the men not as suppliants but as murderous mutineers caused the outbreak to assume a more dangerous shape. There were scenes of violence and bloodshed at Portsmouth, and the State was again imperilled. The King appealed to the victor of the Glorious First of June, and Lord Howe in a very noble and public-spirited way undertook to bring those who loved him back to their obedience. Perhaps in no other way could the breach have been healed. Lord Howe received from Parliament dictatorial powers; and the implicit trust reposed in him alike by law-makers and law-breakers endowed the settlement which he made at Spithead with the permanence of a Treaty of Peace. The seamen weighed anchor and put to sea again, convinced that the wicked old days would never return, and that they had been instrumental in opening the eyes of their fellow-countrymen to the hardships they had suffered in the past.

Unhappily, disorder is an infectious complaint; and no sooner were the tumults suppressed at Spithead than fresh mutiny broke out at the Nore. In this second ebullition there was no redeeming feature. The concessions made by Parliament were applicable, of course, to all seamen and to all naval depôts. The mutineers at the Nore overlooked that, offended against good manners, and stand to those at Spithead, as Marat's followers stand to the disciples of Mirabeau. Parker, the ringleader, and his fellow-ruffians, were the *sans-culottes* of the fleet. It was impossible to reason or argue with them; they replied to overtures with meaningless invective and to fair speeches with ribaldry. A stern treatment was the only conceivable course, and a stern treatment eventually prevailed.

In the meantime, however, much mischief was done, especially in the North Sea command, where Admiral Duncan was keeping watch on the left wing of the anti-British confederation of navies. Once more the menace of impending catastrophe rose like a comet above the horizon; for the French, controlling the whole coastline opposite our shores, decided to make the Texel their place of embarkation, and assembled there 30,000 troops for Britain's overthrow. In the harbour transports were collected to bring the soldiers across, and great expectations were formed of a union which comprised the unconquered army of France and the intrepid navy of Holland. As summer approached, preparations were completed; and this was the moment when the mischief-makers at the Nore persuaded Duncan's ships that, if they wanted to share the indulgences exacted at Spithead, they would have to come out on strike.

Duncan had already detected symptoms of uneasiness in his fleet, and in a manner all his own had quelled dangerous outbreaks in his own flagship and one other vessel which he visited in person. These two sail he could henceforth implicitly trust, but the rest forsook him and fled. He knew there were ninety ships in the Texel; but he also knew the mouth of that harbour to be so narrow that vessels could emerge from it only one at a time. With his two faithful ships, the *Venerable* and *Adamant*, he accordingly seized the narrow pathway in the spirit of Leonidas, and defied the would-be conquerors of Britain to move. Meanwhile he busied himself with soundings, selecting with anxious care a watery grave for his big battleship, so that, if his enemies overcame her, she might, when sunk, still block their passage-way. "I have taken the depth to a fathom," he said, "and, when we sink, my Flag will still be flying."

Happily the Dutch are a phlegmatic people; and having lost their sense of heroics under the Jacobin lash, they preferred to interpret Duncan's challenge as a ruse, and waited with patience until he withdrew. Duncan was only too pleased to humour them. He sent the *Circe* frigate, which had joined him, on busy messages, as if to ships behind the

horizon; and one happy morning received from her, in international code, the distant signal, "Grand Fleet has arrived to reinforce your own!"

Still there were none but the *Venerable* and *Adamant*, and the shameless *Circe* hoisting fibs on the horizon: three ships holding ninety in thrall, and with their brave delicious gaiety saving the British Isles.

The end of the summer saw the end of the mutiny, and the cleansing of the whole fleet from revolutionary influences. The last of the ships to recover their manners were sent to the blockade of Cadiz, where Sir John Jervis, now Earl St. Vincent, broke their naughtiness with the iron rod of his chastisement.

By the autumn Duncan had reclaimed the whole of his ships and re-established the reality and rigidity of his blockade. It certainly looked as if the Dutch could never hope to escape; but, as in the days of Quiberon, rough weather unlocked the door. Duncan heard of their emergence, and nose down on the trail was after them in a flash. On 11th October he sighted them off Camperdown, and inflicted upon them the most crushing defeat in the age-long story of the Anglo-Dutch wars. He disposed of more than two-thirds of the fleet opposed to him, captured the Dutch flagship and the Dutch commander-in-chief; and, with the same magnetic personality which had converted mutineers into paladins, conquered the hearts of those he had vanquished, and brought his prisoners home as—his friends.

So ended the amazing year 1797! And with it the first round of the struggle against Revolutionary France. If the Jacobin armies triumphed wherever they fought, so also did the British ships. Never before in a maritime sense had England laboured under more crippling handicaps; never before had she so gloriously vindicated her claim to rule the seas. What is more, the grievances of her sailors were redressed, and it was possible to hope that the future held in store something more favourable than the map of North-western Europe which the Jacobins had planned. The refusal of England to agree to the opening of the Scheldt has

been described by a writer of English speech and international sympathies as "fighting for a ditch in the middle of an earthquake." Readers of the present book will not need to be reminded that the same sea-power, which had redeemed the Rhine delta from Louis of France and Philip of Spain, was not prepared to give way to Jacobin aggression after victories like St. Vincent and Camperdown.

On the foundation which was afforded by these solid successes Pitt proposed to build up a Second Coalition. He was intensely grateful for what the sailors had done, but wisely insisted that battles at sea cannot by themselves compel military powers to cease waging war on land. England had saved herself by her exertions; she must now try to save Europe by her example. Pitt approached Austria as the staunchest prop of the First Coalition; but found at the outset that Austria would do nothing unless Great Britain would return to the Mediterranean, and revive the old prestige which she had enjoyed there at the time of the Austrian Succession War. With Napoleon's Italian campaign still vivid in the memory, the court of Vienna found it impossible to fight again on the Italian front without the co-operation of a British fleet.

Such a stipulation was perfectly natural, but at the same time difficult to accept, because the Royal Navy no longer possessed any base in the Mediterranean.

It will be remembered that, at the crisis of the American war, Minorca had for the second time been lost. England had in some degree compensated herself by seizing the magnificent base of Castries in St. Lucia; and, by doing so, had certainly saved the West Indies and secured command of the Caribbean. But so little were naval needs understood, so widespread the delusion (even in government circles) that a navy is self-contained, that in 1783, at the Peace of Versailles, St. Lucia, instead of being exchanged for Minorca, was with criminal folly restored to the French, and the loss of Minorca overlooked.

When, therefore, the French Revolution broke out, England was as heavily handicapped in the waters of Southern Europe as she had been in her last war against Louis XIV. She had been fortunate, however, in securing Lord Hood, Rodney's

second at the Saints, for the Mediterranean command; and during 1793 and 1794 Lord Hood accomplished more without a base than his country had any right to expect. He captured Toulon, and eventually reduced the whole Island of Corsica; but as the government at home were unable (in a military sense) to retain either of these acquisitions, the naval power of Britain was used to ill purpose; and, when Lord Hood was replaced by a commander of feebler power, and Spain threw in her lot with the Jacobins, the inevitable order was issued that the British fleet should vacate the Mediterranean and sponge on the good offices of Portugal. To such humiliation was the Royal Navy, for want of a base, reduced at the zenith of its victorious career—the year of St. Vincent and Camperdown.

Embarrassed by Pitt's demand for a display of naval strength where it was most wanted, the Admiralty appealed to "Old Jarvie," still maintaining the blockade of Cadiz, and asked him either in person or by deputy to enter the Mediterranean. By an odd coincidence St. Vincent had anticipated their Lordships' order, and had already sent thither Rear-Admiral Nelson, who since the battle of St. Valentine's day had conducted a plucky night attack on Teneriffe and lost his right arm. Jervis's reason for dispatching a force to the Mediterranean had been his anxiety concerning a combined expedition which he rightly judged to be a new menace to Great Britain; and when he learnt that the Admiralty warrant endorsed his own preconceived views, he proceeded to reinforce his deputy with all the ships he could spare. The captains commanding them were the splendid officers trained in his iron school of discipline, officers whom Nelson quickly enrolled in a new fellowship of affection, which he styled his "Band of Brothers."

The expedition preparing at Toulon was nothing less than Napoleon's famous eastern adventure, the career of conquest which was to eclipse the fame of Alexander and the Star of Islam, the egotistical scheme which he had cunningly camouflaged as an anti-British crusade. Of all that was in Napoleon's head Nelson of course knew nothing. He was criticized by

many officers on the flag-list as too young for a position needing judgment and experience; and when, after due consideration of the scanty facts available, he had made up his mind that the Toulon fleet was bound for Egypt, and had proceeded there and drawn blank, he did for a moment distrust himself. But it was only for a moment. Winging his way back to Italian waters, he learnt that the French had taken Malta on their way to the Orient; and, reconditioning his fleet as best he could, he made for Egypt again, and on the first of August (1798) received from his leading ship the exhilarating signal, "Sixteen sail in Aboukir Bay!"

Napoleon had already landed, and won the victory of the Pyramids. His admiral, Brueys, had asked permission to return to France, and had been forbidden from army-head-quarters to do so. He had therefore ensconced himself in what he thought to be an impregnable position, with his fleet guarded on either flank by sand-banks near the Rosetta mouth of the Nile. In theory his ships could only be assailed along their front; and, furling their sails and dropping anchor, they ran out their guns as a measure of precaution, in case they should be attacked. Nelson had discussed already with his Band of Brothers a plan for the overwhelming discomfiture of the next enemy he met. He intended not to array his forces on a line parallel with his adversaries, but to plant half of his fleet on one side of their van and half on the other. Two English broadsides to each single French ship would spell, he said, not "victory but conquest"; and when the enemies' van had been accounted for, their rear could be destroyed in like fashion.

The French dispositions both helped and hampered him. By lying at anchor, Napoleon's ships were waiting to be destroyed; and, as the day was far advanced and darkness approaching, Nelson hoped to overwhelm his opponent's van without letting the rearguard guess the fate in store for them. On the other hand, the proximity of the French wings to the sand-banks protected them from a turning movement and jeopardized the chief feature of his plan of attack. Eagerly Nelson scanned their formation through his glass, and at

Exterpation of the Plagues of Egypt;— Destruction of Revolutionary Crocodiles;— or — The British Hero cleansing ye Mouth of ye Nile

NELSON AND THE BATTLE OF THE NILE

From the cartoon by James Gillray

length discerned the encouragement he needed. The shoals were invisible, but he detected the French anchor-buoys. His adversaries were not tethered bow and stern, but were held (like a led horse) by a single grip, and required therefore sufficient space to revolve. "Where there is room for a French ship to swing," he said, "there is room for an English ship to anchor!" And he carried out his intended plan—burning, sinking, or destroying the enemy's ships until two alone remained. These owed their escape to their position at the extreme rear of the line, and were subsequently hunted down and captured.

The battle of the Nile eclipsed all previous British naval victories. It restored British prestige in the Mediterranean, it ruined Napoleon's eastern adventure and the army of the Orient, it enabled Pitt to build up against revolutionary France the Second Coalition, and it endowed England with two naval bases; for both Malta and Minorca, like ripe apples, fell at the shock of the victory: Minorca in November, 1798, and Malta in 1800.

The Second Coalition in its early stages promised to redeem the Continent from the thraldom of the Jacobins. The thoughts of Great Britain naturally enough turned to the Delta lands, and the navy and army in a united effort attempted in 1799 the liberation of Holland. The soldiers were ferried across and safely landed, but were unsuccessful in bringing about any change for the better. Their communications ought, on paper, to have been in danger, because there were still in the Texel a sufficiency of battleships to challenge us in the North Sea. But for the Dutch sailors Duncan's broadsides at Camperdown had sounded the knell of doom; and the mutiny of the sailors led to the world-staggering spectacle of the tame surrender to Great Britain of the entire Dutch fighting fleet.

The failure ashore mattered the less because the hour of Europe's deliverance was still a very long way off. Napoleon, intent on his further aggrandisement, and foiled in the East, deserted his army, crept home in a modest little ship, announced his intention of rescuing France from her new

enemies, overthrew the government by the *coup d'état* Brumaire, and established himself as virtual dictator under the title of First Consul. Then with a strategic brilliance transcending even his own records, he overthrew, so far as its continental members were concerned, the Second Coalition, and turned with infinite gusto and zest to the task of strangling Great Britain.

For this purpose he cunningly presented to the half-crazy Czar of Russia the Island of Malta, which he now perceived he could no longer keep himself. The Czar demanded its cession from his late allies the English ; and, on their refusal, obligingly made himself the Corsican's catspaw and revived the Armed Neutrality of the North, which during the war of American Independence had added very gravely to British difficulties. This confederacy, which included both Sweden and Denmark-Norway,[1] had for its object the frustration of the British blockade by resistance to the Right of Search. For complete success it needed the conjoint action of all the neutral maritime states: for Britain's power at sea turned upon her claim to decide in what contraband consisted and to punish those who carried it by the forfeiture of their ships. But if the Northern Confederacy did not comprise every neutral maritime state; it did comprise those who between them exercised a monopolistic control over the trade in maritime stores. Without the timber, sail-cloth and rope of the Baltic states, Great Britain would be powerless to maintain her sea-supremacy.

Napoleon's plan of strangulation was therefore cunningly compounded, and Britain decided to strike at once. In the spring of 1801 a strong fleet was sent to the Baltic with Sir Hyde Parker as commander-in-chief, and Nelson as his second. The mission, intended primarily as an amicable display of force to coax the Confederacy from Napoleon's influence, assumed a new shape when Denmark, controlling the Sound and both the Belts, slammed the door of the Baltic in Britain's face. The position then grew too perplexing for Parker, who had three powers to coerce and no apparent modes

[1] Norway at this time belonged to Denmark.

of coercion. The Danish fleet presented the first obstacle and was drawn out of danger's way, with the fortifications of Copenhagen behind it and a labyrinth of shoals in front.

Seeing the perplexity of his chief, Nelson offered with a detachment of ships to destroy the Danish navy. The offer was accepted; and Nelson, picking his way through the shoal-water, and sounding as he went, brought his ships into action in such a way that the Danish vessels sheltered them from the Danish batteries ashore. The fight that followed was unduly prolonged, because the defenders of Copenhagen sent fresh boatloads of men to replace those who had fallen in the ships. Sir Hyde Parker, sensing difficulty, hoisted the signal of recall; and Nelson, putting his telescope to the eye whose sight had faded after injury suffered when fighting with Lord Hood in Corsica, relieved his signalling staff of all responsibility in the matter by declaring that he had looked himself and could not confirm what they had seen. He then turned anew to the puzzle before him; and, realizing that the bravery of the Danes was resulting in unnecessary carnage, he sent them a letter warning them that their methods would compel him to burn all their ships in one fell holocaust, and suggesting, as a more humane alternative, that they should lose them instead by capitulation. The rulers of Denmark thought that, when their fleet was gone, their own batteries would be able to deal with the intruders; but when Nelson pointed out that the destruction of the Danish fleet was a mere preliminary to the bombardment of Copenhagen, they suddenly changed their tone and agreed to all his requirements.

The triumph of Nelson over every difficulty, naval and diplomatic, opened the gate of the Baltic, and so admitted of further campaigning. But the collapse of Denmark quickly led to the collapse of the whole confederation, and a single sweeping victory demolished the Corsican's plan. Thus, after nearly ten years' continuance, the struggle between France and England ended in a condition of stalemate, with Napoleon's armies unchecked upon the Continent and the fleets of Britain supreme on every sea.

Both powers were very weary, and in 1802 the Peace of

Amiens was signed. There are few now to praise this pacification, and contemporary strictures were acrid and damaging. It was doubtless impossible to redeem the Rhine delta, but students of naval history will note, with something like stupor, that the British government not merely pledged themselves (on conditions) to give back Malta, but, with the thunder of the Nile still ringing in their ears, surrendered Minorca as well.

CHAPTER XV

NAPOLEON *VERSUS* SEA-POWER

THE Treaty of Amiens confirmed France in her possession of the southern half of the Rhine delta. In England such a concession would never have been tolerated except by statesmen who believed in Napoleon's protestations of peace. How mendacious and insincere these were very soon appeared. In after days, at St. Helena, the Emperor confessed that his career would have ended very differently if he could have brought himself to leave Antwerp alone. But he could not do so. As soon as he had become First Consul, he had visited the place and sketched with his inimitable grasp of things how the premier French port must be remodelled. Sites had been chosen by him for new docks, basins, and magazines; and the immense works which his mind conceived had been put in hand there and then. After the Peace of Amiens, he returned to the Scheldt with new plans in his head. He had decided to make Antwerp a spearhead levelled at the heart of England. It was no longer to be merely a mercantile harbour, a London on grander lines, but the biggest naval base in the world, beside which Portsmouth, Lisbon, Brest and Toulon would shrink into insignificance. As a preliminary, he ordered docking accommodation to be prepared for twenty-five battleships, and smaller craft in proportion; and with his own hand he drafted the fortifications which were to make the base impregnable alike from land and sea.

Great Britain watched all his movements with suspicion;

and before learning the full significence of his visit to the Scheldt, had found cause to delay the evacuation of Malta promised at Amiens. When she had certified herself that Antwerp was at last to develop in the manner which she had for three centuries struggled to prevent, she astonished Napoleon by declaring war upon him.

This happened in May, 1803.

The fleets of England at once assumed a dominant position. The home fleet, under Admiral Cornwallis, took up its station off Brest, and the Mediterranean fleet, under Nelson, mounted guard off Toulon. There was little that these two forces could do to bring Napoleon to a humbler frame of mind, but the faithful steadfastness of this famous double blockade rendered him in a maritime sense ridiculously impotent. Cornwallis, with the home bases behind him, surpassed all endurance records, and still held the Brest fleet locked up at the close of two long years. Nelson, with Malta as yet undeveloped and no British base at hand, kept the Toulon fleet imprisoned almost as long. No praise is too high for an achievement unprecedented in the world's history. The far distant storm-beaten ships, on which Napoleon never looked, stood, it has been well said, between him and the dominion of the world.

In 1804 Napoleon converted himself from First Consul to Emperor, and compelled Spain to combine with him in an offensive amd defensive alliance. In 1805 he declared himself ready to throw off the stranglehold of the British ships, to carry his victorious armies across the Channel, to force the "insolent islanders" to their knees, and to dictate terms in London. His plan in its final shape, though simple enough, has been strangely misunderstood. What he proposed to do was to move all battleships from the harbours of France and Spain and concentrate them at a single rendezvous. When they had assembled there, he intended them to sail in overwhelming force to the mouth of the Channel, sweep resistance, organized or sporadic, from their path, and escort the army for the conquest of England, one hundred thousand strong, from Boulogne to the coast of Kent. For the embarkation of the

troops Napoleon made himself responsible and, like Parma in 1588, prepared flat-bottomed boats with which he practised many tedious rehearsals. There was not really very much that was original in his scheme, except the choice of place for rendezvous. And that remained a profound secret, not on any account to be divulged.

There can be no doubt at all that the camp at Boulogne duly impressed the people of these islands. It was known in London that the Emperor rode daily along the dunes, and with a spy-glass gazed at the white cliffs which Julius Cæsar had reached so easily. It was even whispered, and by some believed, that he who had leapt the Alps had, in a rowing boat, pulled across to near Dover and chosen for himself the exact spot at which his soldiers would land. In brief, the problem that haunted men's minds was not whether Napoleon would come, but what he would do when he came.

Such being the case, we have merely to ask ourselves what would have happened if all had gone as smoothly as the Emperor wished, and if there had been no Nelson to expose and ruin the French plan at the moment of its fruition.

Napoleon had battleships at Toulon, Carthagena, Cadiz, Coruña-Ferrol, Rochefort and Brest. He did not ask them to do anything heroic, but simply to evade the English, put to sea, shake off pursuit, open their secret instructions (which would disclose the rendezvous), make all sail thither, and wait for their friends. Suppose that they had done so! Suppose that six British blockading forces had been simultaneously eluded, and six Franco-Spanish fleets had raced for the rendezvous! What then? The question was: what would the six blockading forces do? Napoleon believed that they would hunt for the quarry which had slipped through their fingers, and hurry this way and that in wild confusion. But as Napoleon quite rightly relied on the possibility of evasion, so in like manner had the British Admiralty. Lord Barham, the wise and experienced First Lord, had already legislated for such a contingency. If a hostile squadron escaped, the fleet blockading it was at once to fall back on the mouth of the Channel and put itself

under Admiral Cornwallis. If, therefore, the great aggregation of naval power, which Napoleon wanted, had materialized and sailed from its secret rendezvous towards Boulogne, it would have found in its path the entire British fleet ready to fight it to the death.

But someone will say: Surely if the French commander-in-chief reached the Channel with sixty or seventy sail he could at least hold Cornwallis in check, and pass the word to Napoleon, who could seize the occasion to embark and cross. To which it may be answered: If the British fleet could have been counted upon to remain in Plymouth (as in 1588) and submit itself to a French blockade, then undoubtedly, word could have been passed to Napoleon. But the message would not have helped him very much; for, as in 1588, there was a fleet in the Downs capable of demobilizing the entire camp at Boulogne. And even if the great French Armada had sunk Cornwallis's fleet (a wild hypothesis) and had reached the Downs and blockaded the British force there by closing at once both north and south entrances, the British flotilla, that is to say, the big concourse of little ships in the Strait, would have enjoyed nothing better than sending "Boney" to the bottom, if only he would have accorded them the immense satisfaction of trusting himself to an element which they understood, and he did not. In London and Westminster these things were, as usual, but little understood; and while fortifications were thrown up in Kent; while recruits enrolled themselves hourly for national defence; while the Premier himself, emulating unconsciously the example of Elizabeth, prepared sword in hand to sell his life dearly, Earl St. Vincent, who found it difficult to suffer fools gladly, thus replied in the Upper Chamber to his fellow peers, "I do not say, my lords, that the French cannot come. I only say, they cannot come *by sea.*"

The naval experts, in fact, were entirely sceptical as to the seriousness of Napoleon's intentions. They could not bring themselves to believe that he was, strategically speaking, such an arrant fool as his plan of invasion proclaimed him. As a matter of fact, the only mistake that Napoleon made—

and its magnitude defies all measurement in words—was the application to sea-campaigning of analogies drawn from land. And even here he sinned in good company: for most Englishmen thought with Pitt that the time had come to get into uniform, and considered St. Vincent's sapient aphorism an ill-timed jest in doubtful taste.

What the British naval experts, even the wisest of them, failed to understand was the correct significance to be attached to the Emperor's dispositions. Early in January, 1805, the French fleet at Rochefort ran through the fingers of the British blockade and vanished. What was the meaning of this phenomenon? Did Napoleon intend to focus attention on himself at Boulogne, while some trusted underling perpetrated mischief elsewhere? Was India the target? Or Ireland? The issue was hidden in thickest fog; and until the Rochefort squadron was located, there was certainly one risk uncovered by insurance.

On 30th March the Toulon fleet, under Admiral Villeneuve, shared the luck of the Rochefort squadron; and, eluding Nelson, got to sea and escaped without leaving so much as a trace. In the second week in April the Spanish fleet in Cadiz vanished mysteriously in the same fashion. Napoleon's plans were working smoothly enough, and the smoothness of their working increased in England the mystification of the naval experts and the unseemly trepidation of everyone else. At Boulogne the Emperor paced along the sandhills, using his glass freely, and smiling sardonically as he heard with what success his fleets made for the rendezvous.

He had always maintained, in opposition (it should be noticed) to his own minister of marine, that the failure of previous schemes for the conquest of England had been due to the selection of a rendezvous in Europe. There was no place in Europe free from British vigilance, from sneaking tongues and tell-tale ships. The rendezvous must be at the other end of the world, and even the fleets bound thither must not know its name until they lost sight of land.

In exact conformity with Napoleon's wish, Villeneuve "escaped" from Toulon, was joined felicitously by the Cadiz

squadron, and sped across the world to Fort Royal, Martinique, the rendezvous in question. He arrived there on 14th May.

A few days later—to be precise, on 4th June—Nelson, with a fleet which had kept the sea for the best part of two years, and with no more direct evidence than that Villeneuve had passed Gibraltar, ran his foe to earth, and held up for all the world to see the dead body of the Napoleonic plan, which had seemed to its creator endued with all a fox's tricks and none of his tell-tale scent.

In the realm of fiction inventive novelists have shown how a master mind may from mere scraps of evidence unravel a baffling mystery. But the realm of fiction will not compare with the immenser realities of grand strategy. Never before at sea, nor yet, indeed, on land had there been detective work so confident and so inspired, and on land a vast army can never assume the cloak of invisibility which ocean throws round a fleet. And yet, for more than a hundred years, the only memorial that Nelson's countrymen have dedicated to this, his strategic masterpiece, has been the silly fable that Napoleon, to ensure the passage of his troops across the Channel, enticed the British admiral on a wild-goose chase to the West Indies so as to make sure of having him out of the way. If there were a single grain of sense in such an argument, one would suppose that the Emperor, having coaxed Nelson away, would seize the opportunity to move. As a matter of fact, when he knew for certain that Villeneuve could never reach the mouth of the Channel, he did move. But it was away from England, not towards it. Napoleon once complained rather bitterly of the English that they were so stupid that they did not know when they were beaten. This was a form of stupidity which, to do him justice, he did not himself share!

When Nelson reached the West Indies he received from the British military commander-in-chief exact intelligence of Villeneuve's whereabouts. Had no intelligence been offered, Nelson would have relied on his own judgment, and few will doubt that he would have overtaken his enemy and fought him somewhere near Rodney's battlefield. But the

military commander-in-chief was hopelessly at fault, and the pursuit turned southward in the very hour in which Villeneuve to escape turned northward. Precious time was wasted before the error could be corrected; and, when Nelson had laid his faithful pack upon the right trail, the quarry was well ahead. Thus hunter and hunted having raced westward across the Atlantic, without pause raced eastward back again; and those who follow the story of the chase in detail and read the pathetic entries Nelson made in his diary when he realized that his foes were outstripping him, are in danger of forgetting that the combined forces of France and Spain were committing themselves to headlong flight before a fleet just half their own size.

Nelson's battleships, if kept together, could only plod along at a battleship's pace; but there was nothing to keep a frigate back, and Nelson dispatched the little *Curieux* to carry his tidings to Lord Barham at the Admiralty. The First Lord plotted out the details on a chart, surmised that Villeneuve was making for Coruña, and reinforced Sir Robert Calder who was blockading that port. When, therefore, the combined fleet was nearing the consolations of home, it found that it had escaped the clutch of one British force only to fall into the arms of another.

Calder was not too happily circumstanced. He had the rather complicated task of maintaining his blockade and turning away from it to fight a battle. He was between Scylla, lurking in the rocky coasts behind him, and Charybdis whirling from the Indies. He drew noiselessly out to sea, brought Villeneuve to action, defeated him, and captured two of his ships. For this result he was recalled by his countrymen, tried by court martial, and severely reprimanded for his failure to make more use of a grand opportunity. There was no Voltaire to make a really spicy epigram out of this strange lack in our ancestors of humour and justice; but several French critics expressed a curiosity to know what the English, who bullied Calder for taking ships, would have done to Villeneuve for losing them.

While these striking events had been in progress, diplomacy

had been alert, and about the time that Nelson set off upon the chase which was to spoil the enemy's last hope of invasion, Pitt confronted the Emperor with a Third Coalition which included Russia and Austria. Before striking camp at Boulogne in August, therefore, Napoleon had had time to ruminate over the new situation on the Continent; and military necessity would have deflected his course from Dover Strait, even if the sailors had not been too clever for him.

Nelson, returning from the West Indies, handed over his fleet to Cornwallis (still blockading Brest), and himself came home for a well-earned holiday. But though the risks, which England for two solid years had endured alone, were now adequately covered, and the horrible spectre of invasion shown to be but a nightmare, Nelson's active spirit would not suffer him to rest. Undeterred by Calder's failure to destroy an elusive antagonist, and by his countrymen's misinterpretation of his own strategy and Calder's tactics, he craved permission to sail for the coast of Spain and drag Villeneuve out of harbour and destroy him.

Permission was granted; and, followed to his boat by adoring crowds, Nelson left the shores of England for the last time. At the end of September he took charge of the fleet blockading Cadiz, where the combined fleet, which he had chased across the world, had found a safe asylum. He had resort to every conceivable device for coaxing Villeneuve into the open, but it is doubtful whether the combined fleet would ever have stirred if it had not been for the Emperor's express injunction. Napoleon was now well advanced in his new war against Austria, and required his fleet's co-operation in the Mediterranean. Villeneuve had given Nelson the slip before. He could surely do so again.

Thus were the lists set for the greatest battle ever fought at sea. On 21st October, Nelson, veiling his own battleships till the last moment, sprang with lightning effect upon an enemy much superior in strength, and off Cape Trafalgar vanquished that enemy as no fleet had ever been vanquished before. Twenty of their thirty-three battleships yielded

themselves to his matchless might, and he died with a happy look in his eyes and the word "Duty" on his lips.

Many a book has been written about Trafalgar, and nothing less than a book is sufficient to do justice to the theme. The outstanding novelty was the grouping of the English ships into two independent commands. Collingwood, with the striking arm, arranged his fleet parallel with the enemy's rear, and broke the force opposed to him very much in the way that Howe had done at the Glorious First of June. Nelson having generously allowed his partner a twenty-five per cent. superiority over those he was to engage, undertook, with twelve ships only, to occupy the attention of the enemy's centre and van (twenty-two sail); and, by such fighting movements as the conditions of the ring inspired, promised to distract attention from his partner's blow until it was too late for that blow to be parried. He put his own flagship, the *Victory*, at the head of his own detachment, and disposed his twelve vessels not in order of battle but in column of sailing. His method of approach, which incidentally puzzled his own side without confusing them, utterly bewildered and bemused his opponent, who kept twenty-two battleships marking time, until Nelson's postponed deployment enabled him to gauge what defence to adopt. Emboldened by the success of his thrust and the combined fleet's immobility, Nelson put off deployment altogether, and went head first through the middle of the enemy's line, as Rodney had done at the Saints and Jervis at St. Vincent. Astern of him came the other ships of his own division to chastise the enemy's centre, as the second English fleet (for some time now) had been chastising the enemy's rear. The hostile van, finding itself ignored alike by Nelson and by Villeneuve, did its best to help its friends; but, in order to do so, had to turn itself about, and that in a failing breeze. The time consumed in methodically making the turn brought it to the altar of sacrifice when the friends it should have succoured were beyond relief.

The effect of Nelson's manœuvre, in short, was that of an anæsthetic which paralyzes the body but not the brain.

Throughout the critical stage of the battle Villeneuve was acutely conscious of the forces of destruction menacing the existence of his fleet, but his ignorance of Nelson's intentions prohibited him from making the requisite counter moves. There was at Trafalgar no strategic retirement, no flight from a stricken field. Rooted to the spot, and suffering acutely, both French and Spaniards fought in an heroic way which gave an added lustre to the victory.

But the outstanding and predominant feature of Nelson's masterpiece is its finality. This attribute has never been questioned, never denied, never controverted. Trafalgar is one of the last things. To all that went before it brings an end; on the epoch to which it belongs it rings down the curtain; across the page of history it writes the word "Finis." So much the world has always understood. But with what sense or what meaning should we invest the word finality? To what degree or extent was Trafalgar the close of an age?

In the first place, it convinced Napoleon, as Barfleur and La Hogue convinced Louis XIV., that it was useless any further to wrestle with Great Britain in the way of pitched battles at sea. And if Napoleon at the zenith of his career, with more audacity than any world conqueror before him, declined so to compete with Britain, then, *ipso facto*, no potentate inferior to Napoleon could venture where he had failed. The pitched battle at sea on a grand scale appeared, even in 1805, as a contingency unlikely to recur, unless Britain should forget the secret of her strength or until the weapons of war should perish. Of these two alternatives, the second eventually came to pass. That is to say: before Europe suffered again a convulsion as severe as the Napoleonic, the vessels with which Nelson fought had become obsolete, and, like the galleys they replaced, had been broken up and used as fuel for the fire. The sailing-ship of the line, the loveliest engine of warfare hammered out by the hand of man, fought at Trafalgar her last great fight; and nothing that was individual and peculiar to the sailing-ship could safely be predicated of vessels made from different material and moved by a different force. In this sense, then, Trafalgar is a terminus; through

which, if a man would argue to what follows, he would certainly run his head against a wall.

And not less certainly should the battle be regarded as the finale of a long sea-struggle between England and France in tactical ideas. The first phase of that struggle had burnt itself out in the holocaust at La Hogue. The second phase began when the French during the eighteenth century evolved new methods of maritime warfare. Their chief innovation, as preceding pages have shown, had been a kind of tactical evasion ; and this tactical evasion (for which there can never be any counterpart ashore) was an extremely difficult stroke to parry, an extremely awkward pose to upset. As early as the battle of Toulon, the French (knowing that their own rigging was safe from assault) aimed their deadliest darts while they fled from the field. Byng's vessels at Minorca were so desperately lamed that they could not pursue their advantage. Then came Hawke, like a Judge in Israel, reversing the established order and putting the pursuit before the encounter. The French responded by greater tactical mobility, and in the American war scored not once nor twice. Then came Kempenfelt with his Signal-Book, and in the Revolutionary War Howe compelled the French in part of the field to stand their ground, though many still escaped. At Trafalgar the vertical impetus of Hawke and the biting lash of Howe worked together like a thresher's flail ; the two rods of the flagellator flying asunder to achieve their stroke, and, when most divergent, still united by the hinge of Nelson's genius. Tactically, then, the battle was the joint product of British experience during four preceding wars. It supplied the crushing rejoinder to evasion under sailing conditions ; but evasion under different motive power would present new problems and so inaugurate a new epoch, leaving Nelson's masterpiece like a monument to mark where the old epoch closed.

And if Trafalgar must be regarded as the culmination of all fleet actions under the old order (which has since passed never to return) and as the solution of an enigma which (being solved) was no longer an enigma, with at least equal truth must it be regarded as the Apotheosis of the Sailing Admiral.

Nothing can ever now diminish the measure of the fulness of the stature of Nelson, for his crown of glory was his own character, and long before Trafalgar he was reverenced by his countrymen in a fashion which savoured of idolatry. But none the less he was the heir of all the sailing ages, gathering where he had not sown, and garnering the happy harvest of good traditions which had been tended, nourished, and brought to maturity by the admirals who had gone before.

If there is anything of value in these arguments, then a dilemma may be seen to emerge from them : either Trafalgar was not as complete and conclusive as all men have always believed it, or else it must remain, like some flawless jewel in a king's diadem, beyond the power of mortal man to equal or excel.

On the other hand, like other naval victories over military empires, Trafalgar did not bring an end to the war, or curtail its duration, or even affect beneficially the allied fortunes ashore. On the contrary, it seemed the signal for cataclysm and catastrophe. And this no doubt is the reason for the persistent survival of the legend that the victory delivered Britain from invasion. For it is a natural tendency in men to link up cause and effect ; and the restriction of Napoleon's scheming to the Continent of Europe was too big a conception to be envisaged by those who faced each day the little worries of a little corner of the world.

Napoleon was at war with Pitt's Third Coalition. Before the lists were set at Trafalgar he had captured the Austrian army at Ulm, and shortly after in the snows of December he defeated the combined armies of the Emperor and his Russian allies on the battlefield of Austerlitz. Austria made peace and laid down her arms. Pitt brought his life of splendid service to a close with the sapient prophecy that the map of Europe would not be wanted again for ten years. The Third Coalition had lasted a bare six months, and, like the beast of the Apocalypse, Napoleon ravaged where he would.

The French Revolution had contented itself with setting up affiliated Republics. Napoleon shamelessly annexed them, and added their territories to his own. The theft of Holland, and consequent absorption of the whole Rhine delta.

SCAPA FLOW—THE LAST PHASE

The German Battleship "Derflinger" sinking after being scuttled by her crew

(*By kind permission of the Imperial War Museum*)

enormously strengthened his hold upon the North Sea littoral; and Britain, free now to utilize all the paths of all the seven seas, made unremitting search for joints in his armour through which she could push a weapon which would really hurt him. She took the strong places of France and Holland, St. Lucia and Mauritius, Guiana, Ceylon and the Cape; and she was prepared at the merest gleam of hope to support with all her available strength any state that would rise in arms against the tyrant.

Russia, in spite of Austerlitz, was still unsubdued; but her very inaccessibility made co-operation difficult; and it was not until the end of 1806 that Napoleon's intrigues with the Sultan, keeper of the land-gate into Asia, gave Britain a chance of helping her ally. Russian troops were moved into what is now Rumania, and it was resolved that a detachment of the British fleet should move direct on Constantinople. For this bold project Collingwood, who commanded in the Mediterranean, selected a tried and trusty officer, Admiral Duckworth, who had fought at the battles of Lagos, Quiberon and Grenada, won a gold medal for his conduct at the Glorious First of June, put his country deep in unrecognized debt by his recapture of Minorca in 1798, and only recently had destroyed the whole of the French Rochefort fleet in a sweeping victory off San Domingo. Duckworth discovered that the Turks proposed to belabour him from land and sea; but with his usual compulsion he forced the Dardanelles, silenced the fortresses on either side, captured or destroyed a flotilla which opposed his passage, and in February, 1807, dropped anchor eight miles from the city walls. Farther than this he could not penetrate, for winds were foul and currents adverse. He therefore delivered the ultimatum with which he had been entrusted, but could not back it by a show of force, because his ships' guns would not carry, and he had not been supplied with the bomb vessels necessary for intimidation. The French naval attachés, assuring the Sultan that the British battleships could approach no nearer, urged him to protract negotiations so as to gain time, and reorganized the defence of the Dardanelles so as to destroy the British squadron on

its homeward way. It was against Duckworth's nature to take a denial. But circumstances were too strong for him, and with fine vigour he hacked his way back through the Narrows, suffering heavily from a most destructive fire. The enterprise can only be described as an emergency measure which success alone could have justified. A clamour arose in England, and was directed not against those who had blundered in conceiving the project or undertaken it with insufficient preparation and foresight, but against the Admiral, of whom the righteous Collingwood wrote: "he may not have done enough to satisfy his countrymen, but no officer alive could possibly have done more."

The war was going badly. That must be the people's excuse. In the previous year Napoleon had goaded Prussia into war with him, had overthrown the proud regiments of Frederick the Great at Jena, and on 28th October had marched like a conqueror into Berlin. Little wonder if, in the spring of 1807, the Russians failed to co-operate with Admiral Duckworth. The fall of Prussia exposed them to Napoleon's attack, and they braced themselves for the impending blow. In the summer following the evacuation of the Dardanelles the blow fell, and Napoleon's victory at Friedland closed the last chapter of the Third Coalition. On a raft in the Niemen the two Emperors agreed to the Treaty of Tilsit, wherein they compounded secret schemes for the destruction of the maritime supremacy of England.

These schemes were directed against our fighting fleet, and also against our mercantile marine. Like the services aimed at, they were closely connected, but for clearness' sake may be taken separately.

After making a careful list, the two Emperors found that, if they employed all battleships owned by continental powers, they could count upon a total of one hundred and eighty sail. A large number belonged to neutrals, of whom Denmark was the most important. The crowned conspirators decided therefore on a swift policy of coercion. If Denmark proved stubborn, or even raised a protest, Napoleon undertook to occupy Jutland.

Quick as he was, he was too late. While his troops were still marching northward, a British fleet in September, 1807, arrived at Copenhagen. Admiral Gambier, who was himself armed point device, found the Danes utterly unprepared. He demanded the immediate surrender of the whole of their fleet, a request which naturally elicited a flat refusal. The Danish ships were drawn under the batteries, and the batteries were as fearsome and formidable as ever. But this was the position of things with which Nelson would have been confronted if the Danes had prolonged their resistance six years before. Gambier knew exactly what Nelson intended, and, warning the city to send its women and children to a place of safety, he pushed in his ketches and mortar boats and opened a bombardment. The Danes endured the horrors of fire and destruction as long as brave men dared. But when Gambier called a halt and repeated his demand, they had not the heart to save their ships at the cost of their capital and its suffering citizens. They surrendered every vessel of war they possessed, and to a chorus of exclamation from the astonished world Gambier returned to England with seventy Danish ships. It is difficult to believe that up to this time Napoleon had suffered a more acute disappointment. Nor was he in any measure mollified when, as a watchtower over Jutland and his scheming there, the British navy seized also the Danish island of Heligoland.

But there still remained his warfare against the British mercantile marine, and this being more insidious was more difficult to meet. Indeed, of all the devices engineered by him to wreck our sea supremacy, this was at once the most damaging and the most subtle—the most damaging because it went down to the root of things, the most subtle because he possessed no fleet to give it effect.

If sailors are unable by their victories at sea to bend to their will the insolent pride of military empires, they have at their disposal a force which will slowly but surely mould and remodel the destinies of mankind, and that force is the process of Blockade. Great Britain was already using it against Napoleon, and by the Continental System which he inaugurated at

Tilsit, Napoleon retaliated. He declared that the whole of the British Isles were under blockade, and seriously looked to see our maritime system, on which our very existence depended, wither, decline and fall. The preposterous absurdity of conducting a blockade without the use of seamen and ships must not blind us to Napoleon's machiavellian ingenuity. He knew that British strength was derived from seaborne commerce; he knew that such commerce was dependent upon the markets of the Continent. If he blockaded every port in the British Isles, no ships could put to sea, and his chief enemy would be rendered as helpless as Samson when shorn of his hair. So far, however, from being able to blockade the British Isles, he could not by the usual procedure blockade a single port; but on the other hand, Russia was the only Continental power which he could not grind under his heel; and with Russia as his complaisant partner he could close the whole of Europe to British ships, and so isolate his enemy's coasts as effectually as if they were blockaded in the normal fashion. The essential need was to erect a ring-fence between England and the Continent; and this Napoleon effected by legions of port officials, whose duty it was to slam in the face of British ships all doors from the Gulf of Finland to the Dardanelles. The neutral nations would supply Europe with all that Europe needed; England would be treated as a pariah dog, and driven from the door. Her ships would search for employment in vain, her wealth would cease to accumulate, and her capacity to play a part in world politics would abruptly come to an end.

The Continental System was in the highest degree prejudicial to her safety and prosperity, and Britain could do no more than issue Orders in Council to cope with the crisis as it developed. The net effect of these orders, taken collectively, was to declare a blockade of all ports and harbours from which the shipping of Great Britain was excluded. And there was no make-believe or mockery in this declaration. With her dockyards behind her, Britain was prepared to blockade the whole of Europe and capture and make prize of all vessels which attempted to supply the markets from which she

herself was excluded. If it be argued that such treatment fell harshly on neutrals, then the answer is that Napoleonic statesmanship did not recognize neutrality. The "New Charlemagne" made military necessity the excuse for bringing the whole of Europe under his own sceptre. Britain, on the other hand, tried to meet the views of neutrals by allowing them to trade with ports under Napoleonic control, if they first visited a British harbour and, in exchange for dues, obtained a license to trade. The Emperor immediately issued the Milan Decrees, announcing that all vessels plying under a British license were confiscate to France.

The outcome of the duel depended in chief upon the fortitude of Europe. England, at first gravely incommoded, then greviously injured, searched as she had done in Tudor times for new markets, and found them in the Far East, and more especially in South America. But it is doubtful whether the satisfaction thus obtained could compensate her for the loss of European trade. If Napoleon could have won the hearts of his subject nations, and their unquestioning support for the commercial ostracism of Britain, this country might have looked more closely in the face of disaster. But the Continent loathed the Continental System, with its exclusion of English imports, its restriction of European exports, and its devastating horde of French officials. Almost from the first Napoleon had to ease its bonds by a system of "contracting-out"; and it was his refusal to grant to Spain and Portugal the concessions he permitted to his own country and Holland which brought about the revolt in the Peninsula.

This welcome challenge enabled the navy at last to support efficaciously the war against Napoleon on land. As in the days of Rooke, Shovel and Leake, the sailors carried the army wherever it was needed, and backed it with a selfless devotion which has yet to find a chronicler. They made possible Moore's retreat to Coruña in 1809; they constituted the last and the most stable of Wellington's lines at Torres Vedras in 1810; and when the Duke made his daring push from the frontier of Portugal to the frontier of France, it was the navy which underwrote the enterprise by lending the

British soldiers its own mobility, and shifting their base from Lisbon to Santander as easily as Napoleon assumed a new crown.

The revolt in the Peninsula emboldened Austria to throw off the yoke, and in 1809 Napoleon found fresh cause to question the expediency of the Continental System. It was difficult for Britain to lend Austria her aid, now that the Netherlands were lost ; but any whip for a tyrant was welcome, and it was resolved to equip a combined expedition for the recovery of Antwerp. No expense was spared. A considerable army was raised, and a wonderful fleet, the largest perhaps that ever left these shores. The soldiers were commanded by Pitt's brother, the Earl of Chatham ; and the ships were under Admiral Sir Richard Strachan, who had completed the glory of Trafalgar by capturing Dumanoir and all the vanguard that escaped with him from that stricken field. The Antwerp project was well conceived, but (except as a help to Austria) probably premature. The soldiers were to seize the strong points on the Scheldt, and enable the fleet to proceed upon its mission with all the success which Duckworth had missed at the other focal point of Europe. A good beginning was made by the capture of Walcheren on the north side of the estuary and the occupation of Flushing ; but the collapse of the Austrian armies before Napoleon in the following month invalidated the whole motive of the expedition, and fleet and army returned home to be greeted by their countrymen with derisive verse which has passed into a proverb.

The year 1810 stands out significantly on history's page. Five years had run their course since Trafalgar and transformed the figure of Europe. The French Empire, no longer attempting to restrain its boundaries, had become swollen, distended, and unmanageable. On the other hand, the maritime power of Britain was to outward seeming just as immense and tremendous. In reality both powers were morbidly affected, Napoleon's from the running ulcer of the Peninsular War, and Britain's from the creeping paralysis of the Continental System. The British disease looked as if it would be the first

of the two to end fatally. In 1811 Napoleon's blockade reached its maximum efficiency, and British business fell as it were into a state of coma—factories closing, warehouses choked with unsold goods, and vital industries passing into liquidation.

Then came the crisis. By 1812, with one single exception, all neutral states which counted in the carrying trade of the world had been drawn into the Napoleonic maw. The single exception was America. Far removed from the earthquake throes, she had (in the general decline of trade) first thriven, and then been caught in the jagged cogwheels of blockade and counter-blockade. It may well be thought that she had equal cause for complaint against Napoleon and against the British. This undoubtedly was the case, and she represented her grievances to both sides with the impartiality of a mirror. The British replied that they were championing the cause of freedom against universal despotism and could not afford to throw away the only weapon they possessed. Napoleon answered with the craft of Mephistopheles that, whatever America asked, he would be delighted to concede. As soon as the ambassadors from Washington left him, he screwed up his system against those who had been gulled by his mendacity, and the United States declared war against Britain.

This last blow might have concluded our island story if the United States had been an important naval power. But the United States had no battleships properly so called ; and the sixteen vessels, which at the outset flew the Stars and Stripes, did not look very formidable beside the 686 which flew the Union Jack. But it was just because the British Admiralty refused at first to take the new war seriously that the Americans were able to score the early successes which on both sides of the Atlantic have been perhaps over loudly acclaimed. Against the British frigates exposed to their attack the United States employed vessels nominally of the same rate, but better designed, more strongly timbered, and more heavily gunned. The capture of British men-of-war by these formidable foes awoke Whitehall from its nonchalance. In the second year of the war the American harbours were sealed by the British

blockade, and Captain Broke of the *Shannon* re-established the prestige of British seamen by the lightning rapidity with which he defeated and captured the *Chesapeake*. American privateers still emerged from hundreds of harbours and preyed upon the much-tried British shipping; but the utter failure of the American attempt to annex Canada brought its own satisfaction, and in the winter of 1814 by mutual consent the struggle came to an end.

If America had been a little more patient with Britain, or a little less hasty in believing Napoleon, the war of 1812 need never have occurred. For in that very year the paper blockade was torn in pieces, and the Orders in Council ceased to be operative. Russia, always sensitive in her huge bulk to dearth and famine, declined any longer to submit to the Continental System; in other words, refused to starve in order that Napoleon might overthrow Britain. In the winter, which preluded the entry of America into the war, the Czar threw open his harbours to the imports of the world, and six hundred British ships began unloading at his docks, and crowded all the southern roads with welcome merchandise.

The Continental System, if it was to survive, demanded reassertion, and Napoleon in the very hour of the American storm resolved on the invasion of Russia. From that dread adventure he returned discredited, to face a Europe wherein courage and hope revived at the news of his catastrophe.

In his long-sustained effort to worst Great Britain the Titan had pulled the sky about his ears, and he strove henceforth in vain to ward off the thunderbolts. The final punishment was inflicted by avenging armies on the battlefields of Leipsic and Waterloo. But the decisiveness of these encounters should not obscure the fact that it was England's maritime shield which had saved the world and received the tempestuous rain of Napoleon's blows. This truth did not escape the mind of the Emperor. From his last stricken field he fled to Rochefort, hoping thence to escape to America, as more than one of his battle squadrons had done. But the *Bellerophon* was there to bar his way, and he passed by sea

to England with humbled mien, a pathetic figure on a ship's deck, gazing wistfully at the receding shores of France which he was never to see again. "In all my plans," he said with something of the petulance of a child, "I have always been thwarted by the British fleet."

CHAPTER XVI

THE FREEDOM OF THE SEAS

THE defeat of Napoleon gave Great Britain a mastery over the seas which was not seriously challenged for a hundred years, and this mastery raised her to a pre-eminence in the world which she had never before attained. It put her in a position comparable to that of Venice in the Middle Age, or of Holland in the first half of the seventeenth century. It endowed her with paramount influence wherever ships could penetrate; but it did not, of course, convert her into anything analogous to the great powers of antiquity, to Babylon, for example, or Rome; nor yet to the empire of Spain which Drake assailed. By her struggle with Napoleon Britain had proclaimed herself the implacable foe of any governance based upon armies. Nevertheless, as Venetian and Dutch history had shown, a maritime hegemony, if based on selfish greed and monopoly, might work almost as much evil for the world as a military despotism.

How then was the sea-power of Britain exercised in the century following Waterloo?

Both Venice and Holland began by wrestling with the sea for a livelihood, and then endeavoured to enslave the element from which they drew their wealth. They were self-made states, and were proud of the money-bags which their industry multiplied. They built navies to insure their possessions, and used them when built to prevent other powers from competing with them, or worsting them in the race for profits. Britain, by different steps, had climbed to the ascendancy

with which she opened the nineteenth century. Having early delivered herself from all fears of the Corsican Ogre she had for ten years struggled to bring Europe salvation. She could not fail to gain by the liberation of the Continent; but at least she is entitled to a character for modified disinterestedness; and the help, which she had extended to all who asked for it, was a fine high-sounding keynote to strike in the prelude to an epoch of peace.

There was nothing to prevent Great Britain from using her sea-power to dominate the two maritime foci of Europe—Antwerp and Constantinople. Her armies under Wellington had cleared the Rhine delta, her sailors had forced the Dardanelles. But in both zones her policy was proof against all thought of self-aggrandisement, and in both zones she aimed at a settlement which would bring peace on earth and goodwill among the nations. In 1839 she affixed her signature —as did France, Austria, Russia, and Prussia—to a document which converted Antwerp and its hinterland into a new European State, henceforth to be known as Belgium; and in the following year her navy came to the rescue of the Sultan, and tore up conditions imposed by Russia relative to the approaches to Constantinople.

The Rhine delta problem was ripe for settlement. Napoleon had said that Antwerp, by itself, was the equal in value of any European state; and when they created Belgium in 1839 the guarantors of perpetual neutrality were twenty-four years later than they need have been. But at the other end of Europe the military decline and administrative turpitude of the Ottoman Turks was producing in the Dardanelles and Bosphorus a difficulty as baffling as that of the Scheldt. The Sultan in rapid alternation invited sympathy by his helplessness, and repelled it by his cruelty and lust. His capital city was at the mercy of a naval power, though difficult of access to a military. Twice within forty years of their first intervention our naval forces delivered Constantinople from the ill-disguised ambition of the Sultan's mightiest neighbour. In the first Russo-Turkish War of 1853-6 both Britain and France brought all their strength to resist the encroachments

of the Czar, and the campaigns in the Crimea were followed with the interest and goodwill of many states which did not actively participate. The effect of the war upon our fleet (which saw extensive service in the Baltic as well as the Black Sea) will come under review on a subsequent page. Here it is only necessary to remind ourselves that British maritime power transported armies to Southern Russia as easily as to the Rhine delta, and that the sufferings of the troops and their heroic victories distracted attention (as in the past) from the noiseless efficiency of the sailors and the ships.

Before the outbreak of the second Russo-Turkish War (1877-8) the Sultan had outraged the feelings of the civilized world by the Bulgarian atrocities, and in so doing had facilitated the advance of the Russian legions. No armies on this occasion came to his assistance, nor did he indeed deserve that they should. But with her second sense or subconscious wisdom in matters maritime, Britain declined to allow the Russian plans to mature. No sooner was war declared than a British fleet under Admiral Phipps Hornby dropped anchor at the entrance to the Dardanelles. There for six months a pause was made, for it looked as if the Turks by their heroic defence of Plevna would block the land approaches to their capital. But in December the fortress surrendered, and in the early spring of 1878 the Russian host surged over the Balkans. As they did so, the British fleet moved majestically through the Narrows and anchored in the Sea of Marmora. The Admiral had already written home to the Ministry, " If anything is to be done in or above the Dardanelles the passage should be secured by occupying Gallipoli with a land force " ; but news of further Russian successes made delay impossible, and on 13th February he dropped anchor off the entrance to the Golden Horn. The Russians, meeting at Adrianople none of the resistance they had met at Plevna, raced on to the Turkish capital—only to find themselves forestalled. The British navy was already in possession, with ungrudging unacknowledged vigilance watching over the peaceful interests of the world.

It was impossible to mount perpetual guard in the Eastern

Mediterranean without a suitable naval base, and equally impossible to distrain upon an Aegean island without appearing anxious to control the sea-avenue leading to Constantinople. In July, 1878, the British Admiral detached a squadron of his ships to make seizure of the island of Cyprus, but he himself remained off the Golden Horn not only throughout the summer, but until March, 1879, more than a year from the time of his first arrival. His fleet, more firmly based on its watery foundations than the wondrous city on its fifteen centuries of dominion, was the sanction behind the Congress of Berlin, and the suasion behind Disraeli's subtlety. "A fleet of British ships-of-war," said Nelson in 1801, "are the best negotiators in Europe"; and never did a truth receive more striking illustration than from this coup of Admiral Hornby's. "Peace with Honour" was the verdict of the hour; and while the statesmen returned to bow to the plaudits and receive their stars and garters, the sailor remained at the post of duty until he had made sure that the last Russian had left Adrianople. An earldom for him would have been a poor enough reward; the actual recognition differed but little from what Saunders received for the capture of Quebec.

The unselfishness of our Byzantine policy was not really understood until a later date; and the retention of Cyprus, a hasty choice without sea value, was in marked contrast to our customary zeal for dispensing with naval bases. But our resolve to use our maritime strength in succouring the oppressed and standing up to the bully was put beyond all doubt in cases too numerous even for a passing reference. In 1827 Admiral Codrington, one of the heroes of Trafalgar, with French and Russian help, fought a great sea-battle at Navarino, which delivered the down-trodden Greeks from oppression and added a new kingdom to the map. In 1833 Admiral Sir Charles Napier, on a battlefield as memorable as Codrington's, championed the cause of the little Queen of Portugal, and near Cape St. Vincent swept Don Miguel's usurping navy off the sea. In 1840 Admiral Sir Robert Stopford, at the bombardment of Acre, spoiled the destiny of a military adventurer from Egypt who looked to dismember

the Ottoman Empire; and in 1859 the British Navy stood by the exiguous forces of Piedmont when they strove to evolve the modern kingdom of Italy from a "geographical expression."

Upon occasion the rulers of the sea displayed an almost wanton generosity, as, for example, when they gave away what they had received themselves after Waterloo—to Greece the famed Ionian Islands; and to Germany the Island of Heligoland, which the recipients in due course converted into a fortress of great strength.

However remarkable may have been the work of British sailors in Europe, it was eclipsed by their record on the further side of the Atlantic. An impulse to shake off the fetters of obedience to Europe had during the Revolutionary epoch declared itself in the Spanish and Portuguese dominions in South America. But it was not till after Waterloo that the Liberationist movement began to fructify, for it was not until after Waterloo that British naval officers could be spared. In November, 1818, however, Admiral Cochrane (better known to-day as Earl of Dundonald) arrived in the southern part of the revolting province of Peru, and from that moment onward for the next six years he awoke in the southern seas the bright romantic memories of Drake. In 1820, after a series of adventures which beggar the wildest fiction, he captured Valdivia with all its fortresses, just as his flagship sank beneath the wave. On the strength of his achievements the people he befriended were able to raise a loan of a million pounds in London and to establish themselves as the Republic of Chile. Cochrane then proceeded to more ambitious and more difficult work, and putting together such vessels as would float decided to attack the Spanish fleet which was based on Lima. Hearing that "il diablo" was coming, the Spaniards drew their flagship the *Esmeralda* behind an impenetrable zareba of defence: two guardships to give warning, forts mounting three hundred guns, a boom made of chain cables and twenty-seven gunboats. With a superb mixture of shrewdness, valour and impudence, Cochrane cut out the *Esmeralda*, destroyed the Spanish sea-power in the South

Pacific, and established the free Republic of Peru. His services were now clamoured for from every quarter, and he gracefully yielded to the entreaties of those who were bent on severing the bonds that still bound Brazil to Portugal. His wonder-deeds as commander-in-chief of the Brazilian fleet exalted his name to the clouds. He hunted a fleet of thirteen sail from Bahia to Lisbon, drove thousands of troops ignominiously to follow them, captured countless vessels, unnumbered transports, and mountains of military stores; and all this with a single ship and without the loss of a man.

By the autumn of 1823 he had added three new states to the map, and in December the President of the United States promulgated the "Monroe Doctrine." This famous pronouncement, which had for the pith of its teaching the cautionary injunction "Hands off America"! was flung with Olympian gesture at the European autocrats who thought the time had come to intervene. But little meaning would have been attached to the American President's Message, and still less to the British Premier's epigram, "We have called a new world into existence to redress the balance of the old," if it had not been for the colossal figure of Cochrane, before whose frigates the navies of Europe melted away, and before whose seamen the potentates of the "Holy Alliance" shrank into idle shadows.

No suspicion of national aggrandisement entered into these mighty transactions. If it was well to deliver those who groaned for enfranchisement, then the sea-power of Britain had put the world in its debt. And even more truly did it do so in another branch of activity during the period under review. In 1848, a year made memorable by European convulsions, the hydrographic department of the Admiralty quietly presented to Parliament a summary of work which it had by that date completed, and a summary of work which it desired to undertake. It had surveyed and made careful charts of the East Coast of Africa from Delagoa Bay northwards, of the Red Sea, of the Persian Gulf, of the coast of China from the mouth of the Canton River to the mouth of the Yang-tse-Kiang, of the whole of the "great island"

of Australia, and of the western coast of South America from the Equator to Cape Horn. It commented gratefully on permission just given to survey and chart the Islands of New Zealand, and modestly hoped that it would be allowed to round off its labours by undertaking the Eastern Mediterranean, especially the coasts of Asia Minor and the Cyclades, the Continent of Africa from the Bight of Benin to Delagoa Bay (very badly needed), the Malabar and Coromandel coasts of India, the Malay Peninsula and Straits of Malacca, the China Sea, especially the southern outlets, the Yellow Sea, the Islands of Japan ("of which we know little"), the coast of Korea and the confines of the North Pacific, the Arafura Sea, the Island of Tasmania, the western coast of America from Vancouver's Isle to the Equator, the eastern seaboard of South America from the mouth of the Plate to the mouth of the Orinoco, and sundry islands of the West Indies. It cast a regretful look at the South Pacific, but advised postponement of labour there while more important tasks claimed priority. It commended the work done by the French government along the Mediterranean coast of Africa, and thought that the eastern coast of North America (south of the Bay of Fundy) might safely be left to the United States.

The mention of other governments gives this amazing list its subtle charm. If Tunis, Algiers, and the coastline of the Eastern States be excluded, all the uncharted coasts, harbours, estuaries, and islands in all the oceans of the world seemed to the British Admiralty a natural sphere of investigation for the rulers of the sea. The permission sought for was granted, the work proceeded to its close, and the results were made available for all the races of mankind. There was none of the incentive of gold or jewels which actuated the Spanish and Portuguese in the sixteenth century. The Royal Navy, with its busy instruments and sounding lines, plotted the illimitable waters of the globe with no inducement other than "security for such as pass upon the seas upon their lawful occasions."

If British mariners were to vanish from off the earth and all other record of them were to perish, this might

stand alone as a not unworthy memorial of their unsung toils and selfless excellence.

The making of the Admiralty charts led to many geographical discoveries, but these were no more than incidental to the main purpose. There was no such field for exploration in the nineteenth century as the Spanish and Portuguese had enjoyed in the sixteenth. The main features of the planet had been ascertained, except for the two polar caps. These were known to be freezingly inhospitable, and yet the desire to extend the range of human knowledge provided British seamen with motive sufficient to attack them. The Arctic had been boycotted since Baffin had declared in 1616 that the North-West passage could never serve as a highway to India. On the other hand, Captain Cook, by his circumnavigation of the Antarctic continent, had accomplished a task as remarkable in the eighteenth century as anything done by his predecessors, and the nineteenth century saw both poles besieged by the heirs of Davis, Hudson, and Willoughby. Apart from scientific data, appreciated only by a small circle, the repeated efforts of the British mariners had no prize in a worldly shape except the discovery of the actual Poles. Yet instead of employing sea-power to fence the coveted prizes, they published their pathfinding to all who could read, and led the applause when other nations pushed ahead of them and won the prize.

Here was an altruism of which mankind can never have too much; and yet it is hardly more admirable than the work done by British seamen in expelling pirates from the ocean-world, and delivering the human race from the inherited curse of the slave trade. Without the aid of history men cannot picture for themselves conditions of life in preceding centuries, and in the absence of chronicles it is difficult to understand that prior to the nineteenth century the only "freedom of the seas" was the freedom of the evil-doer. Those who were strong enough to take care of themselves (fighting navies, for example) could sail where they would; but those who were weak or voyaged alone were in narrow waters held up more frequently than coaches ashore by high-

waymen and footpads. The " Pax Britannica " has changed the outlook of all who plough the sea ; and many a weary soul, broken by servitude, has clutched the hem of the Union Jack in childlike faith that under that emblem no man need remain a slave. At the time of Waterloo the Mediterranean was as dangerous a route for a wealthy trader as Hounslow Heath in the days of Claude Duval. The Barbary Corsairs, it has been said, prolonged their lives, because the European powers preferred piracy to the risk of seeing one of themselves established on the north coast of Africa. In 1816, however, Great Britain sent out an expedition to end for ever this shameful state of things. Lord Exmouth was in charge, and without difficulty imposed his will on Tunis and Tripoli. Algiers defied him, and the Admiral read the piratical, slave-trafficking Dey one of the navy's sternest lessons. Like Blake before him, he feared nothing in a righteous cause ; but, entering the harbour, he silenced the mighty batteries, destroyed the enemy's fleet, and rescued fifteen thousand Christian slaves. Having cleansed an Augean stable he then left the conquered land to be annexed (when they were ready) by the French. And the suppression of wickedness at Algiers may be taken as characteristic of work done in all parts of the world—in the South Pacific, and Persian Gulf, against Malays and Dyaks, African Arabs and Chinese.

The abolition of slavery in 1833 throughout the British Empire gave the British sailor fresh work to do and a new interest in the Continent of Africa. All coloured races were suddenly endowed with a new status, and none felt the need of it more than the blacks. Livingstone, the apostle of light to the Dark Continent, unfolded to the natives their first tidings of the Gospel, and to the kingdoms of the world the earliest intelligence of mighty tracts untravelled by man. Africa till then had been familiar only as a coastline, and had exported only a single product—human labour for tropical plantations. The flag of the British navy set a continent at liberty and put upon the Negro the value of a Man.

If we remember that old-time voyages to the East and West Indies gave Portugal and Spain a title to divide the unex-

plored parts of the world between then, then indeed we should find cause for surprise if the infinitely greater work of Britain in the nineteenth century gave her no claim to the still vacant parts of the globe. And yet the careful searcher will find nothing in our annals analogous to the claims set up by Spaniards and Portuguese. The foreign critics of Britain are right when they say that our Empire in 1815 was insignificant and in 1914 took the wide world in its embrace. At the time of Waterloo our oversea possessions comprised little more than Newfoundland, Canada (east of the great lakes), the Cape Peninsula, certain parts of India, the seaboard of New South Wales, and a string of precious islands. But it would be utterly misleading to say that the British government exploited the Royal Navy to make seizure of the globe. On the contrary, the nineteenth-century rulers of England (feeling the growing burden of responsibility) were inclined to draw back, to yield ground, to evacuate territory. The colonizing process has been one rather of spontaneous national expansion under the aegis of the fleet. So far are we from being right in the belief that nineteenth-century England created an Empire, that it would be vastly nearer the truth to say that the Empire has created modern England. The British Isles in 1815 made a compact state capable of standing up to France at her zenith, and even fighting Napoleon's armies in Spain. But those days are gone, and the British Isles to-day are incongruously exiguous in extent and population compared with modern Russia, Germany, and the United States. The people of this country have subconsciously corrected the narrower vision of their governors, and in the spirit of Raleigh have ventured forth in ships to build up new heritages for the British race in the furthest quarters of the earth.

The exculpation of Britain from the taint of grasping greed may seem less convincing when we turn from Colonial pioneers to the founders of modern India. It was no blind chance that led British proconsols to seize Singapore, the gateway to the Further East (1819), or Aden, the postern between them and home (1839). It was the same motive that led Nelson to Aboukir Bay, and Nelson's heirs to Mauritius. If India

was to be held, then it behoved the guardians of India to look well to the strategic points that mastered the routes thither. The completion of the Suez Canal in 1869 revolutionized the western approach, and led to the British occupation of Egypt, and our eventual responsibility for the Soudan. But though this may seem like deliberate empire-building, it must be remembered that the whole vast fabric arose out of trade and nothing else. Our first footholds in India were trading stations; and the enterprising merchants who by the interchange of commodities linked up East and West were as much entitled to ask for the protection of the Crown as those who crossed the Bay of Biscay or the North Sea or the Atlantic. The towering magnitude of our Empire in the Orient is the measure not of political ambition but of the volume of British trade. Our responsibilities have increased in measured step with the broadening and lengthening of mercantile avenues.

British naval power after Waterloo lent itself, beyond all doubt, to the purposes of trade and Colonial expansion. But the spirit of freedom, born of the sea, reacted beneficially on the administration of both forms of activity. Under the Colonial system of the eighteenth century the thirteen original settlements in America were forbidden to develop except along such lines as the Government at home might prescribe. But the new Colonial Empire of the nineteenth century was set at liberty to develop, without restrictions, along the lines of its own unfettered choice. In the reign of George III. well-meaning statesmen on this side of the Atlantic tried to raise American taxes for the purpose of American defence. But the modern Mother of kindred and coequal Dominions has given, as a mother should, without counting the cost, and asked for nothing but affection in return.

And not less remarkable than the enfranchisement of the self-governing British peoples has been the liberation (under the Navy's shield) of the entire system of British trade. Of the arguments adduced by Cobden in support of his views, many have been confirmed and some have been disproved. Nothing now can invalidate his contention that Free Trade was a practicable policy at the time of its adoption, just as nothing

now can establish his confident prophecy that the other nations would eagerly follow if Britain would give the lead. Man is of necessity restricted in his outlook by his environment, and Cobden was an Englishman recommending a policy suited to England. The rest of the world turned a cold shoulder to the Manchester School, because the rest of the world had no Trafalgar to their credit nor the sceptre of sea-sovereignty which Trafalgar conferred.

The adoption of Free Trade led inevitably to the abolition of the Navigation Acts, by means of which the economists and statesmen of preceding centuries had built up the maritime greatness of their country. The edifice of British sea-power had by the middle of the nineteenth century received its coping-stone, and the scaffolding poles, which had been necessary during the process of erection, could safely be withdrawn. Commodities of every description from all parts of the world made the lesser harbours of the British Isles greater than mediæval Antwerp. Raw material, in stacks higher than the great pyramid, incessantly accumulated in a realm which had transformed itself into one immense industrial centre. Flags of all nationalities were to be seen in the docks of the world's greatest exchange. The land of liberty had thrown open her doors, and throve upon hospitality.

Even this princely evidence of freedom was insufficient, and with a gracious gesture Great Britain swept away her claim to possess the Narrow Seas. All the waterways round her coasts were open to all without demur and without challenge. No license was needed to fish in the North Sea; no salute required in the English Channel. The rights of Britain, wherever her rule was obeyed, henceforth extended seaward but a mile or two. Thus the White Ensign became the token of equal rights for all, a pledge of the brotherhood of all mankind. As the century neared its close the battleships of Britain (wherever seen) were the guarantee of integrity in word and deed; and the British sailor came to be regarded by races of every colour and every creed as a warrior, capable of delivering trenchant blows, but preferring always in any one of a thousand ways to lend a helping hand.

CHAPTER XVII

THE COMING OF THE IRONCLADS

SOME hostile critic perhaps may say that England could afford to be magnanimous in the nineteenth century because the immensity of her naval strength removed from the maddest of maritime projects the element of risk. If the navy rode triumphant over every sea, why should not Britons trust themselves to unprotected homes in distant continents, or cover the globe with a countless host of unprotected merchantmen, or admit alien commodities (including food and raw materials) into unprotected markets?

Such reasoning is conclusive and unanswerable so long as we admit the premise on which it rests—the incontestable power of the British fleet. But the march of science and the progress of invention were conspiring slowly and insidiously to undermine the foundations on which British naval supremacy was based.

A policy suited to 1815 was not unsuited to 1855, because the Engineering Renaissance of the nineteenth century moved slowly until (with its own momentum) it began to gather way. But the following fifty years swept the sailing navy into the limbo of discarded panoplies, and, reducing the material advantages of all big states to a common level, cut away the actual foundations on which British policy was based.

Only once before in the maritime history of the world was there a revolution comparable to that which, after Waterloo, transformed the nature of the battleship. And the earlier revolution which in Tudor times lifted England to her first

pre-eminence was less far-reaching. The nineteenth century battleships not only employed (like the Tudor vessels) a new motive power and vastly superior weapons, but made use of a new substance for the fabric of their hulls. The earlier revolution, with the advantages it brought, was confined to England, and was compressed into the twenty years which separate the *Great Harry* from the *Regent*. The nineteenth-century revolution, by contrast, was cosmopolitan, and consumed a century. Its three contributing factors—motive-power, weapons, and fabric—developed on somewhat divergent lines and at first may best be considered under separate heads.

The steam engine, invented in 1769, had been applied to vessels afloat before the outbreak of the French Revolution. Rapid strides were made with river craft, and in the year of Waterloo a sea-going ship proceeded from Greenock to London under her own steam. On her way she called at Portsmouth, and the amazement occasioned by the sight of such a portent broke up a court martial then sitting in the *Gladiator*. But though the new form of propulsion found ready acceptance in the merchant service, the Royal Navy looked askance at it. The early steamers were moved by paddle-wheels, and these in a ship of war would have been a source of danger from their frailty, and would most seriously have interfered with the accommodation of guns upon the broadside. The Admiralty purchased the new craft to act as tugs, and Turner's famous picture of the *Fighting Temeraire* shows the use to which naval steamers were put at the time of Queen Victoria's accession. Shortly afterwards steam was applied effectively to the screw propeller, which was open to neither of the objections levelled against a paddle-box. Vested interests for a while delayed the recognition of the new device; but in 1842 two Crown vessels, *Rattler and Alecto*, the first fitted with a screw and the second with paddles, were by Admiralty orders lashed stern to stern and ordered to go right ahead. The issue was not long in doubt, and the screw-ship *Rattler*, snorting contemptuously through her long smoke-stack, made off, dragging the *Alecto* after her. This famous tug-of-war made it possible to apply steam to the old wooden walls

of Great Britain; but the new force was only accepted by battleships as an aid to their propulsion, as an auxiliary to masts and sails. When the Crimean War broke out the fleets both in the Black Sea and Baltic differed in appearance but little from those that fought at the Nile and Trafalgar. Their single screws were exceedingly useful in helping them to leave harbour or to retire from the fighting-line when injured aloft; but the architecture of wooden sailing-ships did not allow the new motive-power to do itself justice; and defects, such as they were, strengthened opinion (already strong) that a mode of propulsion which depended on a necessarily limited supply of fuel could never compete in endurance with the limitless capacity of sails.

The old wooden walls were nearly as conservative in the matter of armament. Nelson's long guns all threw solid iron shot, varying between the size of a billiard ball and the size of a football, and weighing from three or four pounds to thirty-two. After Trafalgar the French, to redress the balance of advantage at sea, evolved what for a time was called the "Shell Gun." The English sailors at first declined to patronize it, because the imperfection of the fuse made it highly dangerous, and the eccentricity of the projectile's flight made it unreliable and inaccurate. The French, however, persevered with the weapon, and by the time of Queen Victoria's accession had enormously improved it. From this date its use was made permissive in the Royal Navy, which before adopting it whole-heartedly preferred to wait for the test of real experience. This test was supplied by the Crimean War, and the answer of experience was delivered in no uncertain voice. At Sinope the Turkish fleet was annihilated by the Russian shells, and at Sebastopol the English ships suffered so severely from the same scourge that they were thankful enough to have screw propellers to move them out of range. But though the days of the round shot were numbered, British officers still complained of the shell's trajectory. What was now wanted for the ship's gun was a rifled barrel; and as soon as peace was signed, inventors who, by modernizing the old musket or "Brown Bess," had enabled our British soldiers

to win the battles of Alma and Inkerman, turned their attention to the improvement of heavy ordnance. In 1858 the Armstrong gun was ready, and the Admiralty at once gave it a careful trial. But as the rifling of the barrel rendered muzzle-loading impossible, and as the screw-shutter or breech-block with which it was fitted was considered too perilous a contrivance for official sanction, the acceptance of this remarkable weapon was delayed. For a while, therefore, the new or explosive projectile was lodged in a gun of smooth bore by the old-fashioned method of loading.

Explosive projectiles, by their mastery over wooden ships, made the Crimean War a turning-point in naval history, because they compelled resort to some new material for the fabric of a battleship's hull. Iron had already met acceptance in the merchant service. It was found to resist better than wood the strains and stresses of mechanical propulsion, and it lent itself by reason of its strength and malleability to greater keel length and finer lines. The *Vulcan* was completed at Glasgow for canal service as early as 1818, and soon after Queen Victoria's accession the era of iron merchantmen may be said to have been firmly established. But so long as the round shot held its pride of place, the navy refused to countenance a change of fabric; for the simple reason that in oak the cannon ball made a hole which could be stopped by a plug or covered with sheet-lead nailed to the planking, whereas in iron it left an open wound passing the wit of man to staunch. The bombardment of Sebastopol and the sufferings of our oak leviathans caused a natural revulsion of feeling. Before the war ended, our allies the French found an antidote to the plague of shells, and at the bombardment of Kinburn put into the firing-line three ships which were protected, like mediæval knights, with body armour of metal plates. Until the gun in its turn improved, these vessels were virtually invulnerable; and earning from the British bluejacket the felicitous nickname of "Ironclad," they passed it on as a descriptive title to the new epoch of naval warfare which their advent heralded.

One year later than the Armstrong gun the French carried

naval architecture a definite stage forward in their attempt to stereotype the temporary expedient which had served them so well at Kinburn. *La Gloire* of 1859 was a wooden ship protected above the water-line with a corselet of iron, behind which the guns were mounted. The British Admiralty at once eclipsed this achievement and produced the *Warrior*, the first all-metal battleship, with an iron hull, and a belt of iron armour thick enough to withstand contemporary shells.

The *Warrior* was in every sense an epoch-making ship; and it may be well, therefore, before proceeding further, to remind ourselves that in 1860, the year of her creation, the navy stood committed to masts and sails, counting on the screw as a useful adjunct, and that it stood committed also to shell guns with the strict understanding that they should be loaded from the muzzle.

The *Warrior* was undeniably an epoch-making ship, but she did not indicate (as a sign-post should) how sailors and constructors should proceed. The twenty-five years succeeding her launch must be described as a transition period, in which an incredible number of ship-types were tried, only to be outclassed and discarded. There was no perceptible process of evolution. Development expressed itself in a dozen irreconcilable styles, and not even the most famous constructors could say in what direction ship-architecture was tending. It must suffice here to summarize the outstanding products of the period.

The big gun was brought to a pitch of perfection. A safe and effectual breech-block was produced, and this cleared the way for a rifled barrel to control the flight of the shell by making it spin like a top. Nelson's heaviest gun could throw a thirty-two pound shot a distance of nearly 3,000 yards; the new gun could throw an 850 pound shell over 20,000 yards. Nelson's gunners liked to see the men to whom they were opposed, knowing that at more than a few hundred yards their own weapons were liable to miss; the new naval officers with telescopic sights hoped to make accurate hits at a quickly moving target more than ten miles away.

The growth of the gun evoked a responsive thickening of

H.M.S. "WARRIOR"

From a contemporary lithograph in the Macpherson Collection, by permission of A. G. E. Macpherson, Esq.

armour, even when a steel cuirass supplanted one of iron. The weight of the armour made it necessary to restrict the amount carried, and much doubt remained as to what parts of her body a battleship should guard with this impenetrable shield. But the diminution in the number of guns and the enhancement of their value made protection of the battery a first call; and, after due trial of many alternatives, the long-range guns came to be mounted (in pairs) in strong steel turrets shaped like martello towers and revolving like railway turn-tables, one turret at either end of the ship.

A method of mounting which allowed the guns to be adequately protected and at the same time to be fired in almost any direction had merits too obvious to be neglected. But the revolving-turrets introduced a new difficulty; for their accommodation seriously interfered with the working of the ship under sail. The problem of reconciling the new and the old was really insurmountable; but in his desire that the turret should be fully justified, Captain Coles, its champion and advocate, built from his own design in a private yard a battleship which claimed to answer all requirements. She had, as it were, two upper decks, the topmost carrying the masts and rigging, and the lower the revolving turrets. The *Captain*, as she was called, began by exacting a tribute of praise even from her unfriendliest critics, and then suddenly capsized off the coast of Spain with the loss of almost all on board. The completeness and the poignancy of the disaster, which occurred in 1870 and attracted world-wide sympathy, banished masts and sails as a mode of propulsion for British battleships. Henceforth the constructors were given a free hand to set their turrets fore and aft in the best method their skill could suggest.

The belated abolition of masts and sails gave the marine engineers the opportunity for which they had patiently waited. Twin-screws, inapplicable to the sailing ship, immediately replaced the single propeller, and inventive genius turned its attention to improved boilers and engines. For the first time in her history the battleship assumed a capacity for sustained speed, and the slowest man-of-war

afloat soon surpassed in any weather the pace of Nelson's fastest frigate under full canvas in a favouring breeze.

Reliance on mechanical propulsion restored to the man-of-war a faculty which she had lost since the galley epoch, the faculty of moving towards any point of the compass. Under sails the battleship had been debarred from direct advance towards three-eighths of the visible horizon; that is to say, the sector which the wind guarded with its breath. Machines brought freedom of movement. But this faculty, like others newly acquired, brought its own perplexing enigma. If a battleship could move in any direction, in what direction ought she to move? How would the enemy, having the same opportunities, bring his fleet into action? Before the time of Drake the galleys had been drawn up, like lancers, in line abreast, and had particularly relied on the use of the "ram." The new battleships of the mechanical era quickly adopted the same terrible weapon, and the weight of experience favoured the view that the pendulum had swung back to pre-Tudor conditions. The appalling destructiveness of an end-on charge by an ironclad using her ram hardly needed the demonstration which it accidentally received. At the same time, those who argued that all ordnance should be trained forward, so as to support the power of the ram, were met by the rejoinder that good gunnery would prevent the enemy from closing, and so make line abreast look ridiculous.

At this point in the development of the ironclad a new factor made its influence felt and gave a fresh twist to enquiry. The "mine," or infernal machine of the sea, was an old device, and had been used by Prince Rupert against Robert Blake. It had been much employed and much improved during the Crimean and American Civil Wars. But its use had always been attended by disappointment, because (if success was to be other than capricious and accidental) the assailant needed a cloak of invisibility to approach near enough to utilize a weapon so awkward. In 1866, however, the automobile mine made its first appearance, and from its shape and properties was christened the "torpedo." Speedy steam vessels were designed to make use of it, and one of these craft,

under the name of *Lightning*, was added in 1877 to the British fleet.

Those who were unfriendly to us ordered an ever-increasing number of torpedo boats; and the battleship, which had been devoting so much of her thought to ramming, line abreast, and end-on fire, became uneasily conscious of the splendid target which her broadside afforded to a submerged projectile aimed beneath the armour-belt. A new weapon was needed for the new menace, and the first measure of defence took the form of quick-firing guns, capable of discharging twelve shots per minute. Three-pounder and six-pounder Hotchkiss and Nordenfelts were accepted eagerly by big men-of-war, and were mounted to overwhelm with a swarm of missiles the lightly built torpedo boats. But the new craft cunningly cloaked herself in black paint and the darkness of night, and under such shrouds offered small chance to those who desired to make her their target. For a while the battleship, to protect her vitals, added to her wardrobe a crinoline of steel netting; but the torpedo, which by this time was almost animate, learnt to cut a hole through it with a pair of shears in her nose. The final remedy took the form of jackals for the lion. In 1893 the Torpedo Boat Destroyers, with a speed hitherto unequalled, announced their readiness to shield the big ships by hunting the pest off the sea. For a while it looked as if the scare of infernal machines was past; but as the "T.B.D." or "Destroyer" very quickly learnt to use the menace, which she herself had been designed to ward off, the remedy proved worse than the disease.

But the discovery of the quick-firer had led the artillerists to greater things, and they now produced "big" guns of the repetitive character—forty-five pounders and 100 pounders,[1] firing as quickly as Nordenfelts. These weapons could kill a destroyer of 300 tons as easily as a torpedo boat of thirty; and, even if the destroyer screened her approach, could still prove useful against unarmoured enemies and the unarmoured parts of a hostile battleship. They were in consequence installed, and in their turn modified the fashion of their day.

[1] Called for short 4·7 and 6 inch.

At the centenary of Trafalgar the first-class man-of-war had a primary armament of monster guns mounted in pairs in turrets fore and aft, and a secondary armament of quick-firing "heavies" disposed (like the battery of the *Warrior*) upon her broadside.

The rapid fire of the new heavy gun seemed to discount the value of torpedo craft; for, since air offers less resistance than water, the quick-firers' projectile travelled in a single second further than the torpedo could travel in a minute. But the under-water weapon had always relied upon a masked approach; and though night was for long the only reliable screen, a more effective one was now discovered. About the date of the Trafalgar centenary the torpedo boat dived under water herself and came up again as a "Submarine." At last she had gained the invisibility she coveted, and threatened to kill the battleship without offering her antagonist a mark. Night was no longer a condition of use. The torpedo could be fired in daylight.

By this time fresh experience of naval warfare proved beyond any doubt that battle in the Ironclad epoch would be conducted, as throughout the sailing era, in line ahead or Indian file. No doubt any longer existed that the twentieth century battleship, like Nelson's *Victory*, should bring as many of her guns as possible to bear upon her broadside. There was little enough to criticize in the existing disposition of the guns; but, as the architects grew more certain what tacticians wanted, they were able to invest their creations with infinitely more power. In 1908 the *Dreadnought* was completed; and dropping the idea of a secondary armament, accommodated ten monster guns (in pairs) in five turrets, four of which could be fired on either broadside.[1] This epoch-making ship, in spite of the fact that she wore heavy armour, was able to travel through the water at a much greater speed than the *Lightning*, the earliest torpedo boat.

Yet there was little doubt that ships of the Dreadnought

[1] The secondary armament, however, was too valuable to be spared, and was re-introduced into subsequent ships, to supplement the all-big-gun batteries.

type could acquire even greater speed if they were provided with fewer guns and less heavy armour. Tacticians were quick to demonstrate the advantages which would accrue from a squadron of this character. Like seventeenth-century "dragoons" they could, by their mobility, outflank the enemy or envelop him, bring him to battle if he looked like declining it, and pursue him when he was beaten. So was evolved the "Battle Cruiser," capable of taking her place in the "line," and the speediest vessel that had ever done so; worthy of comparison with the battleship herself, but possessing four turrets instead of five and wearing seven-inch armour instead of eleven.

At this stage the evolution of the ironclad must be regarded as complete, not because further changes were unlikely, but because the capital ship, thus constituted, was the harbinger to Britain of her first great sea-struggle since the overthrow of Napoleon. Between the building of the *Warrior* and the building of the *Dreadnought* the world was witness of several important naval wars, but in none of them was Britain privileged to bear a part. Unlike military states, whose power has been based on land, she never thrust a quarrel on her neighbours to profit by her armaments. The naval wars between "North and South," between Austria and Italy, between Chile and Peru, between China and Japan, between Spain and America, between Japan and Russia, offered valuable experience, afforded memorable lessons, disclosed vital secrets. Great Britain could only look on as a spectator, and sift the evidence second-hand. With greater maritime responsibilities than all the rest of the world collectively, she had to watch the progress of other fleets and model her own with what wisdom she could. If the progress of material in the nineteenth century be closely examined it will be found that Great Britain's invariable viewpoint was, "How is this fresh menace to be met?" If she had used her strength as a giant and a bully she might have destroyed other navies before they grew to maturity. But her mission was to establish the freedom of the seas, and her motto was "Defence not Defiance." She had vast liabilities

which she was compelled to cover with insurance, and the dawn of the twentieth century found her still supreme upon the ocean ways. But the *Dreadnought* relegated all existing battleships to a limbo of " pre-dreadnought " obsolescence, and like an impartial handicapper put all the nations behind the starting-gate of " Begin again ! " Britain built the new battleships, as she had built in turn torpedo boats and torpedo-boat destroyers, in order to guard and protect her Empire, her trade routes and her imports ; and in the same defensive spirit she was seeking in 1914, and seeking (unhappily !) in vain, for an effective counter to the undersea torpedo-boat, the elusive and malignant submarine.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WORLD WAR

MORE than once in the course of human history a single book has been sufficient by itself to turn the thoughts of mankind in a new direction. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Origin of Species* may be taken as illustrations; and another volume, comparable with these, appeared in the year 1890 under the title, *The Influence of Sea Power on History*. Its author, Captain Mahan, was an officer of the United States navy, and his primary object in writing was to stir his fellow-countrymen to a fuller interest in what, he thought, most nearly concerned their welfare. But the book, which was the first comprehensive treatment of sea political-philosophy, attracted universal attention, and was discussed, appraised, and criticized in every important language in the world. Its chief doctrine may be compressed into a single sentence, "He who is master of the sea is master of the situation." But this is not to belittle Mahan's achievement. His claim to greatness lies in the fact that he preached a doctrine of infinite possibilities and made his argument at once simple, attractive, and convincing to men without special knowledge or experience of maritime affairs.

Only a few months before the book appeared a new Kaiser had inherited the Hohenzollern throne—a new Kaiser destined to trouble the world as the world had not been troubled since Napoleon's time. Wilhelm II. must be regarded as Mahan's chief disciple. He learnt from the new compendium of philosophy that if the German Empire was to dominate the

world, the German Empire must be supreme upon the seas. His proposals at first met stout resistance in the Reichstag; but after a number of years he bridled the opposition and found in von Tirpitz his ideal minister of marine. The first German Navy Act appeared in 1898; and the second, which followed in 1900, proclaimed that "Germany must have a battle-fleet so strong that, even for the adversary with the greatest sea-power, a war against us would involve such dangers as to imperil his position in the world." Thus, within ten years of the publication of Mahan's book, the leading military state in Europe had resolved to put its teaching to a practical test. The moment chosen was opportune. When Tirpitz took office Great Britain possessed no less than fifty-four battleships and Germany no more than fourteen. But the coming of the Dreadnought put the two on an equality so far at least as the future capital ship was concerned.

The growth of the German colonies and trade warranted some increase of maritime insurance; but the pronouncement in the second Navy Act showed that German sea-power was not to be commensurate with oversea responsibilities so much as an aggressive adjunct to militaristic equipment. German colonies and trade were to afford the excuse for the "fighting" fleet which alone could make the Kaiser "master of the situation." The War Lord's frequent references to "shining armour," "the mailed fist," and "the rattling of the sabre in its sheath," left the world no reason to doubt that Prussia remained loyal to the ambitions of Frederick the Great, which may be summarized as an overwhelming greed for your neighbour's goods.

The militarism of Germany was a standing menace to the safety and well-being of France, who had already suffered the horrors of a Prussian invasion in the war of 1870. The dual alliance between France and Russia was a natural reply to the menace, and seemed a wise precaution. And yet the political instability in the Balkans, and the interest of the Czar in the Sclav states south of the Danube made it easy for the Kaiser to select his own moment for a world war by embroiling his Austrian partner in a Balkan war, and

supporting that war against the Russians in order to have an excuse for fighting France.

The only roads by which the German armies could properly march on Paris led through Alsace and Lorraine, annexed by Bismarck after the war of 1870. On this frontier the French were prepared to profit by experience and give a good account of themselves. But when the Ten Commandments have been repudiated, new possibilities appear; and in 1914, when the "day" was proclaimed, the Germans decided to march on Paris through the little land of Belgium, whose inviolable neutrality they had sworn to guarantee and protect. This diabolical device incidentally unravelled three centuries of careful British statesmanship by sounding the doom of Antwerp, which could hardly fail to fall to the legions of Prussia. It is open to doubt whether the full meaning of the impending disaster was apparent to the British democracy. But the pluck of the Belgian people in opposing Germany, and the vile Prussian plot to stab France in the back, brought England into the war without other thought than to rescue the oppressed. By the irony of circumstances Antwerp, the key to British policy, was from the first beyond help, for the navy alone had strength to rescue it; and the navy, by a double obstacle, was debarred from doing so. The same sand-banks that took toll of the Spanish Armada prohibited big battleships from nearing the Belgian coast; and the sanctity of treaties, which Britain had drawn her sword to defend, closed the water-gate of the city with the Dutch control of the Scheldt. Even if Britain had possessed a spare army with which to reinforce the Belgian garrison, the dispatch of that army to Antwerp would have been contrary to British tradition, because the soldiers once interned in the fortress would have been deprived of the support of the fleet.

That support found splendid expression from the first moment that this country entered into the struggle. Once more was re-enacted the apparent miracle of the old wars, the miracle which united England with the Continent, and enabled our soldiers to march dryshod to the help and succour

of their allies. Never a single man of the six millions whom Germany at the outset put into the field landed on British shores except as a prisoner; but, to stem the onslaught of Prussian militarism, Britain placed upon Continental battle-fields, wherever she would, avenging hosts which every year grew more numerous. They brought their own food, their own munitions, their own transport, in ceaseless procession across the never-failing bridge supplied by the British fleet. No epic of praise could do justice to such a theme; and all was done so quietly, so smoothly, and so well, that many Britons who had left unstudied the history of their ships, thought that Germany could also bridge the seas, and with this nightmare before them threw up hasty East Coast defences to balk our invaders when they landed.

If the navy could not in 1914 save the British Isles from the fate which had overtaken Belgium and France, it is quite certain that there was no other agency capable of doing so. And yet public opinion was undoubtedly right in focusing attention on the East Coast. For the first time for two hundred and fifty years, for the first time since the middle of the seventeenth century, the North Sea was to be the chief theatre of naval warfare.[1] And along her eastern seaboard Britain was utterly unprepared. In all her past maritime struggles, alike against Spaniards, Dutch, and French, her scheme of operations had pivoted on the Channel, and here her naval bases were all that could be desired. But along the East Coast, though commercial harbours were as plentiful as they were vulnerable, she had no first-class naval base with the exception of Chatham, which for twentieth-century purposes was inaccessible. It was the oft-repeated omission: a new oceanic crisis found the British fleet in the main theatre of war without any adequate docks, without ship repair establishments, without a properly protected home for rest, refreshment, and refits. On the other side of the North Sea

[1] This fact, so obvious to everybody nowadays, was early recognized by Admiral Lord Fisher, who recalled British squadrons from more distant seas, and combined almost all the most modern battleships into a single Grand Fleet for home defence. By this and other timely reforms he deserved well of his country.

the Germans were well provided with everything for which an admiral could ask; but the British navy had to console itself with the reflection that its lack of a base in the North Sea proved it innocent of the aggressive aims which produced the war.

If it was handicapped by lack of preparation, the British fleet, as in its struggle with the Dutch, was befriended by geography. A naval war with Spain or France, even when the contest was confined to Europe, involved at least two main theatres. But since the Baltic affords no thoroughfare, the "German Ocean" gives those who christened it a single water frontage; and this for five hundred miles of its length is shut in by the British Isles. The outlets, two in number, comprise the Strait of Dover, twenty miles broad, and the stormy gulf between Scotland and Norway, something under two hundred. The British strategy was in consequence of the simplest kind. Admiral Jellicoe with the Grand Fleet moved to the undefended, inhospitable Scapa Flow in the Orkneys to block the northern passage, while a secondary fleet held the Dover defile and sealed the only outlet to the south. Behind the portcullis of the Dover patrol the shiploads of soldiers crossed the English Channel in security. The detached fleet at Dover was somewhat exposed, seeing that the Grand Fleet was five hundred miles away; but the North Sea is constricted to a funnel shape between the Dutch coast and East Anglia, and here in the Narrows Commodore Tyrwhitt's Destroyer force was poised at Harwich, like a lance in rest, to take passers-by in flank.

Thus for a while silence sank upon the sea, and many of British birth, depressed by the silence and expecting the pomp and circumstance of Gravelines and Trafalgar, began impatiently to ask for what purpose their battleships had been built. Such impatience was excusable in those who daily witnessed the rapid development of land campaigning. Yet the answer to such questioning was simple enough. The battleships of Britain served the North Sea as double-barred doors serve a house. So long as Admiral Jellicoe and the Dover Patrol held firm, the German fleet in all its tremendous

strength was literally locked out of the world. The Hohenzollern dreadnoughts could not place themselves upon a single trade route, could not touch the outer hem of a single oversea Dominion, could not interfere with the imports on which the British Isles depended, could not stem the swelling stream of warriors who came from every land and clime to save the cause of civilization.

Fate ordained for the British fleet the defensive function of a "shield" that the world might be saved from its oppressors; and if this much be admitted, then it logically follows that Fate decreed for the German fleet a posture exactly the reverse. The German fleet had been founded on aggression, and had been constructed as an integral part of an all-pervading advance. On the North Sea front that advance was checked, unless the British ships were destroyed. For the German fleet Fate decreed the offensive, and to this stern decree the German fleet turned a deaf ear. Unlike the Spaniards, the Dutch, and the French, the Prussian antagonists of British sea-power declined to put all to the touch. It is true that their dreadnoughts numbered only thirteen, and Admiral Jellicoe had nineteen; but such disparity seems hardly sufficient excuse for a military power which with so much arrogance had hurled down the gage of the challenger.

To cover their own lack of initiative the Prussians hastened to inform the world that the British navy had lost its old courage and dared not come out and fight. If there had been a vestige of truth in this, if (for the sake of argument) the British, like their adversaries, had possessed a fortified base in the North Sea to which they retired for shelter and safety, then the Kaiser's fleet could have sailed where it would and secured the command of the sea. But the sting of the German insinuation lay in its silent appeal to the long British roll of victories at sea, for if this was brought to a final close then Britain's glory would indeed have departed. And to the Germans it seemed incontestably obvious that so long as their fleet lay sheltered behind its impregnable defences the roll of British sea victories could not receive any augmentation of glory.

In this line of reasoning they proved themselves wrong before the first month of the war was past. Commodore Keyes, who had been exploring in his submarines the very threshold of the German bases, reported that the enemy's flotilla were in the habit of patrolling the avenues that led to the threshold and changed guard in the early morning. On 28th August, therefore, the Harwich force, comprising Commodore Tyrwhitt's destroyers and the submarines of Commodore Keyes, broke at dawn into the very precincts of the German stronghold and under fire from the guns of Heligoland delivered their attack. German light cruisers[1] hastened to the scene to mend the fortunes of the day; but Admiral Jellicoe had sent his own light cruisers in support, and, still better, his battle cruisers under Admiral Beatty. Commodore Tyrwhitt had already done wonders, and hurled two German light cruisers, which attacked him simultaneously, into the recesses of the Bight, when Admiral Beatty, in the spirit and fashion of Quiberon days, brought his immense ships through waters made perilous by mines and submarines and completed the German rout. Three hostile cruisers were destroyed, three others crippled, and a destroyer sunk; and the victors, although within easy reach of the Hohenzollern dreadnoughts, stayed for a while in German waters, doing their best to rescue and help the vanquished.

The battle of Heligoland confirmed the German higher command in their decision not to match their fleet with that of Britain. But fresh apologetics were necessary to explain away strategical pusillanimity; and the world was now informed that the overwhelming numerical superiority of the British battleships made it necessary for the Kaiser's navy to destroy a certain percentage of them piecemeal, so that battle could afterwards be engaged with a fair prospect of success. "The Process of Attrition," which extended over the next two months, was to be carried out in part by the

[1] Light cruisers were so called to distinguish them on the one hand from Dreadnought (or Battle) cruisers, to which they were equal in speed but inferior in size and strength; and on the other hand from pre-dreadnought cruisers which, in the matter of speed, they had rendered obsolescent.

indiscriminate sowing of minefields, and in part by the submarine. Neither method required the presence of the High Seas Fleet, which continued to hide its head.

The submarine attack, so far as its main objective was concerned, proved a complete and total failure. The British cruisers patrolling the North Sea suffered heavily at first, just as their forerunners the frigates in the brave days of old. But the poignancy of sorrow which these losses occasioned should not blind us to the proper sense of proportion. They proved the deadly peril which our surface ships daily confronted, but they were powerless to affect the issue. When the fearless intrepidity of our seamen had been tempered by the necessary touch of circumspection, even the older and slower men-of-war ceased to suffer casualties. And as to the main battle fleet, not a dreadnought was touched. Against their lawful prey the German submarines were useless.

The indiscriminate sowing of minefields brought the enemy an undeserved success off the north coast of Ireland, when the dreadnought *Audacious* met her doom. But on the opposite side of the account must be set the appearance in the main theatre of the ubiquitous and noble legion of minesweepers. These faithful ships, manned for the most part by those whose ancestors had for centuries threshed the same waters for fish, now raked up and gleaned the infernal machines which the enemy of mankind had sown. Nor was the lot of the German attritionist an altogether enviable one. On 17th October the British light cruiser *Undaunted*, with four destroyers in company, found four of the enemy's destroyers engaged in sowing a field. The British laid all four intruders on the bed of the North Sea ; and without expecting praise came home like watchdogs who have shaken the life out of vermin.

Meanwhile the pressure of the British navy's blockade rendered the High Seas Fleet unpopular at home and put the "process of attrition" out of favour. The Kaiser's army leaders and the German people generally agreed in demanding some higher form of activity from the battleships of the Fatherland. As no legitimate form of activity was possible without

resort to a naval engagement, the battleships of the Fatherland, like the armies who had violated Belgium, resolved on a course of conduct utterly illegitimate and indefensible by all the standards of war. The German battle cruisers, seizing occassions when the coast was clear, used their speed to cross the North Sea; and after bombarding English fishing towns or seaside resorts, rushed home again with tales of the demolition of hostile fortresses.

As a matter of fact, the German missiles fell mainly upon churches, workhouses, and hospitals, killing many defenceless citizens. For this reason some have thought that, behind the bombardment must have lain ulterior military purpose; but this is doubtful. If the slaughter of the innocents was intended to lure the Grand Fleet southward from Scapa to defend the Narrow Seas, then the raiders sold their souls in vain, for the torments of the East Coast did but harden British purpose and stimulate resolve. Perhaps with these perpetrators of outrage the sowing of minefields was a primary aim; but it is more probable that such dissemination was actuated, like the sable fluid of the cuttle-fish, to cover their own retreat.

Three times in three successive months the German battle cruisers set out for England. In November, 1914, after the Yarmouth raid, they escaped scot free; in December, after the Scarborough raid, they escaped from vengeance by the skin of their teeth. In January, 1915, they got as far as the Dogger Bank, and there were brought to battle. Admiral Jellicoe hemmed them in on one side, and Admiral Beatty on the other. They turned at once and raced for home, leaving all but the British battle cruisers far astern. Admiral Beatty in the *Lion*, with four sister ships, pursued hot foot on the trail. The pursuit was like the pursuit of Hawke, gaining speed with the swoop, untiring, relentless. Never had battleships travelled at such a pace, and for a while two of the five fell astern. The *Lion* extracted every ounce of work from her engines, and avoiding the wake of the enemy, which was like to be strewn with mines, raced on a parallel course somewhat to southward. At last she came near enough to open fire; and, still moving at nearly thirty miles an hour,

secured her first hit at ten miles' distance. Her consorts, following her, emulated her lead, and very soon the punishment of the British salvoes began to tell upon the enemy. But though the Germans still fled for home, in no degree slacking their speed, they showed themselves on this occasion in a new character, and fought with valour and distinction. Their armament allowed them, like Parthians, to fight as they ran away, and they used their guns with good effect and secured a number of hits. Three of the four Germans concentrated their fire on the *Lion* to rob the British of their leader, and amid the thunder of stunning detonations Admiral Beatty left the conning tower and stood unsheltered on the bridge. As he did so the much-tried *Lion* received a blow which instantly affected her speed, and two minutes later was obliged to turn at right angles off her course to avoid a submarine. At this critical point three of the German ships were on fire, and the rearmost, the *Blücher*, had received a mortal wound. Admiral Beatty, unable to maintain the chase in his crippled ship, signalled to his squadron Nelson's well-loved message, "Closer action!"; but the flags shrank in the wind and became illegible, and the straining dreadnoughts, ignorant of the *Lion's* wounds and their leader's message, paused in mid-career and abandoned the pursuit. At noon the *Blücher* rolled over and sank, while her flying consorts, still in flames, sped away for lack of someone to give them the *coup de grâce*. The British sailors then turned to the rescue of three hundred enemies swimming in the water.

The victory of the Dogger Bank, however incomplete it may have appeared to the victors, put a period to the German raiding parties, at least for a time. The Kaiser's maritime advisers turned their attention to another illegitimate form of offensive (consideration of which must be momentarily held over);[1] and for fifteen months the East Coast towns were left unassailed from the sea.

Early in 1916, however, the German admiralissimo, worn out by the cares of office, retired, and his death a few weeks later transferred the command of the High Seas Fleet to Admiral

[1] Below, pp. 273-4.

Scheer. This change was big with consequence. Admiral Scheer had studied the battle of the Dogger Bank carefully, and based upon it a plan for which he won the Emperor's approval. What he proposed was to raid the East Coast of England again, fly before the British pursuit, and lure the pursuers into the arms of the German High Seas Fleet, who would destroy them. In April, 1916, pursuant to this plan, the German battle cruisers bombarded Lowestoft, another undefended town, withdrew as the first assailants approached, and, somewhat to their own surprise, reached their base unpursued and unmolested. In the following month Admiral Scheer somewhat modified his scheme. Learning that the British battle cruisers and some of our dreadnoughts were at Rosyth, he resolved to mass his submarines at the mouth of the Forth, and dispatch his own battle cruisers to bombard Sunderland. His belief was that part of the Rosyth fleet would be torpedoed as it emerged, and that he could account for the remainder, when his own battle cruisers, acting as live bait, drew the precipitate Britons towards him. For the success of the plan a good reconnaissance was necessary, and this he hoped to acquire by means of Zeppelins. The weather, however, was unpropitious for air-scouts, and he supplemented his scheme by an alternative raid upon the British light cruisers which, with provoking assurance, were always hovering in the mouth of the Baltic. On the coast of Jutland the Zeppelins could not fail to help, and the wireless screams of the British light cruisers would be certain to draw Admiral Beatty into the ambush thus cunningly contrived.

The operation could not be postponed beyond the end of May, because the German submarines would then return to their base. On the 31st of the month, therefore, the weather being thick and misty for the time of the year, Admiral Scheer gave word to postpone the Sunderland alternative and make for the Skager Rak. His battle cruisers went ahead under Admiral Hipper, and he himself followed at the correct strategic interval. It would be doing him an injustice to think of him as in any mood other than one of buoyant optimism. Before half-past two in the afternoon, however, the battle cruisers

of the two belligerent powers made contact; and Admiral Beatty, sensing what he had in front of him, raced to cut off Admiral Hipper from his base. The German battle cruisers, playing the part allotted to them, turned and made off as they had done off the Dogger; and at 3.48 the great battle of Jutland began. Admiral Beatty had six battle cruisers to his adversary's five, and astern of him followed Admiral Evan Thomas with four swift battleships, which could offer assistance if the pace slackened. But against this, Admiral Hipper had the advantage of position, for his own vessels were shrouded under a grey cloud bank, and his opponents stood like silhouettes against a yellow western sky. Fortune also declared herself his ally and aided him with grim annihilation unparalleled at sea; for two of the great British battle cruisers, under his gun fire, were suddenly destroyed by their own magazines. Such calamities were not unknown in sea-history; but they were of rare occurrence, and never since the invention of gunpowder had destroyed one-third of a fleet under fire. Admiral Beatty, unappalled, led on; and mastering his opponents, as he had done at the Dogger, had the satisfaction of seeing one of his enemies in flames, when a new turn was suddenly given to the encounter by the appearance on the battlefield of the German High Seas Fleet.

Admiral Scheer had good reason to applaud his own astuteness, for his designs so far had gone well. The "live bait" had brought his opponent down to him, and he hastened to make the most of the catch. He had forgotten to ask himself why it was that British light cruisers were so constantly near the mouth of the Baltic; and, when Admiral Beatty's ships doubled on their traces and substituted a northerly course for a southerly one, he forgot to ask himself why it was that the British seemed to prefer the coast of Jutland instead of flying home. Even when Admiral Evan Thomas, with cool generalship, screened Admiral Beatty's sixteen point turn, and then himself, like a magnet, also turned to the north; even then the German commander does not seem to have understood that instead of wielding the sacrificial knife, he was offering his own throat for immolation. Proud of his skill, his judgment,

and his tactical acumen, he dressed his line, approached nearer his foe, and for a while the heat of the struggle abated.

It was about half-past five in the evening that the crisis came. Admiral Scheer, accepting as a natural phenomenon the fact that the British were allowing him to close the range rather than themselves alter course, with superb confidence hoisted Hawke's favourite signal, "General Chase." As he did so the whole aspect of the battlefield changed. Admiral Beatty's battle cruisers suddenly swerved across the head of the German line in the evolution commonly known as "crossing the T." This put them upon an easterly course; and out of the east, to meet them, came a second British squadron, apparently of battle cruisers also. Utterly dazed and perplexed, the German Admiral was trying to appreciate the new situation, when between the two hostile cruiser-squadrons, and literally under the *Lion's* bows, appeared a third cruiser force, coming south. To counter the threat to the head of his line Admiral Scheer, following Admiral Hipper, curved round to the east, and their broadsides disposed of the overbold ship that had precipitated herself against their front. But the ship in question, carrying the flag of Sir Robert Arbuthnot, had played her part. Like the messenger in a Greek tragedy, she died by violence as she delivered her tidings; but she delivered her tidings none the less; and when the smoke pall that covered her cleared away, and the British battle cruisers drew like curtains aside, there in all the majesty of its conscious power lay the main British battle fleet under Admiral Jellicoe.

When contact was first made between the two opposing forces Admiral Jellicoe had been sixty-five miles to the northward. His were the light cruisers in the Skager Rak which had tempted Scheer to his mad enterprise. His had been scores of similar plans which had failed to tempt Scheer's less venturesome predecessors. As soon as he had heard that the battle cruisers were engaged, Admiral Jellicoe had set his whole fleet moving at its fastest through the water; and pending his own arrival had dispatched Admiral Hood, a direct descendant of Rodney's second, to reinforce Admiral

Beatty with three additional battle cruisers attached to his own fleet. This was the squadron which, to Scheer's perplexity, had plunged across his front from the right-hand side as Admiral Beatty crossed from the left. The faster ships, having gained a great tactical advantage, now steered clear of the British battleships so that Admiral Jellicoe might complete his masterful design. Admiral Scheer, moving in line ahead towards the east, found his direct path, and every path to the immediate right and left of him, impenetrably barred by the dreadnoughts of England. In his own country the acknowledged master of naval tactics, he was, by the leader of the British fleet, baffled, confounded, out-manœuvred, and outplayed. As the British battle line opened fire, the German battle cruisers withered and wilted and drooped away, exposing Scheer himself.

The German Admiral from this moment had no thought but flight, and yet flight was no easy matter. Before anything could be evolved, his own leading battleships had been severely mauled by Admiral Jellicoe, and but for the fading light would have suffered more grievously. As his only resort, Scheer ordered his destroyers to the head of his line to screen him while he doubled on his traces. The destroyers responded gallantly, as others of their class had done during the war. They fired torpedoes at the British battle line, and belched forth smoke voluminously. The torpedo attack proved useless, for Admiral Jellicoe, in a single movement, inverted his ships like the laths of a Venetian blind, let the torpedoes run between the slats, then pulled the open screen back again into the form of a shutter. On the other hand, the smoke of the destroyers mingled with the thickening gloom of evening to shroud the Germans in the cloak they needed, and Scheer turned his ships right about and bolted into the west.

By the manner in which he had deployed his fleet, Admiral Jellicoe had secured two great advantages. He had drawn his battle fleet under the grey cloudbanks of the eastern sky, and compelled his opponent to accept the stance of visual inferiority. But better than this, he had stationed himself at the key position to dominate what followed. The battle-

field was shaped like an open fan, one side of the spandrel being the coast of Germany, the other the coast of Jutland, and the waters which rolled against the shores of Britain forming the outer curve or fringe. Like the spokes of a fan, many paths led home to the haven which Scheer longed to reach; but, unhappily for himself, he had sown near the fan-handle a minefield which covered all but three. Thanks to his faithful submarines, Admiral Jellicoe knew the position of these channels; and, drawing his battle fleet across their entrances, he denied his adversary ingress.

A general advance of the British westward would have served the enemy best, for the length of Admiral Jellicoe's line was limited, and the further it proceeded from the handle to the spread of the fan the more chance there would be to get round it. Admiral Scheer, if he moved at all, was obliged to move east; and it seemed to him best to make the attempt in the thickening shadows than commit hari-kari next morning in the daylight. When he had last seen the British they were moving southwards. Hoping that they were not as ably led as they seemed to be, he attempted at seven o'clock to round their northern end or right wing. In line-ahead formation he therefore advanced, for line ahead economized space. The mist and drifting smoke hung about him like a veil, but the bright sky behind betrayed him. Once more the British battle-fleet stood across his path, and once more the head of his fleet was shattered by unanswerable battery. Again he summoned his destroyers to the rescue; and deeming their aid insufficient, ordered his battle cruisers to lay down their lives and ride like valkyries into death's valley of shadows. Again the destroyers vainly sought with torpedoes to shake the British line; again they set up their wall of sable vapour; and behind it Admiral Scheer again made off into the hopeless west. The battle cruisers were checked in mid-career, and limping followed him.

Meanwhile Admiral Beatty, who at this time was to eastward of the British battle-fleet, again gave magnificent effect to the purpose for which his squadron had been formed. Skirting Admiral Jellicoe's left wing, he raced after the fugitives with

intent to locate and harry them. In spite of the darkness which now fell on the sea he made contact again at half-past eight, and Admiral Jellicoe detached a squadron of battleships to support him. But darkness was denser than destroyer smoke, and under its cover Admiral Scheer for the third time threw up his heels.

Admiral Jellicoe, seeing that nothing more could be done till the morning, made good his position so far as human wisdom availed. He guarded his left wing by movement, and his right by a flotilla of destroyers. He covered two of the routes by which Scheer could get home, and spread a minefield over the third.

On the morning of the first of June not a vestige of the Germans could be found. The British battle-fleet beat this way and that, unable to believe their eyes, unable to credit their senses. Scheer, with a gambler's luck, had tried a second cast in the same direction as before and made at last the final bolt into his hole. What the passage cost him none can say with certainty. As he squeezed past the right extremity of the British line, Admiral Jellicoe's rearguard of destroyers found him and joyfully gave their lives in an effort to stop him, and so he proceeded by the north-eastern channel which Admiral Jellicoe had mined. The toll must have been heavy in human casualties if not in the lives of ships. But the escape was almost sufficient excuse for the plaudits with which Scheer's countrymen celebrated their admiral's return.

So strange a deliverance of the defeated side is not without parallel in British naval history. The shift of the wind at Gravelines snatched the Spanish Armada from the guns of Drake and from the gaping shoals of a dead lee shore. But this was in broad daylight. A closer counterpart is afforded by the long contested battle of Portland. For three days Blake had striven to force a decision, and by eventide on the third had driven the Dutch battle-fleet against the French coastline south of Griz Nez. Then he moved his own ships to close the Strait of Dover, and waited with confidence for the morrow. Daylight found him alone upon the field, and thus he concluded his dispatch: "If it had pleased the Lord in His wise Providence, Who sets bounds to the sea and over-

rules the ways and actions of men, that it had been three hours longer to night, we had probably made an interposition between them and home." At Jutland the "interposition" was successfully made, but the German fleet escaped.

Contemporary comment in Britain focused itself on Admiral Jellicoe's losses, especially of three dreadnought battle cruisers, for gallant Admiral Hood's flagship suffered the fate of those already mentioned. The destruction of these tremendous vessels by their own magazines could not fail to impress the imagination; but the lesson to be drawn is the devoted willingness of the British sailors who gladly accepted risks. The blowing up of the *Eendracht* at the battle of Lowestoft took the heart out of the Dutch; the blowing up of the *Orient* at the Nile put a period to the French resistance; but the destruction of the *Indefatigable*, *Queen Mary*, and *Invincible* left the British morale at Jutland unimpaired.

The ironclads of Germany, better protected than those of Britain, better able to withstand both mines and torpedoes, better sheathed with steel above their magazines, sought, not without skill, for a way of escape, and counted themselves happy to find one. But the battleships of Britain flung their lives away in self-effacing efforts to make Scheer turn and fight. Without risk to material, no fleet shall rule the waves. Hawke lost two battleships at Quiberon Bay, and modern chroniclers omit them as trifles. Nelson saw three of his battleships take the sand before he gripped the Danes at Copenhagen. To each generation its own form of calamity: it behoves us to be not less Spartan than our ancestors.[1]

[1] Like Trafalgar, Jutland has left behind a heritage of controversy. The matter under discussion, however, is of a different kind. The death of Nelson left men in doubt whether his overwhelming destruction of the enemy's capital ships was directly traceable to the plans laid down before the opposing fleets made contact. The Jutland problem sets itself to discover whether any plans, other than those laid down before the battle, would have resulted in a Nelsonic destruction of the enemy's capital ships. The earlier enigma, after the lapse of a century, has been solved, to the general satisfaction, by unprejudiced experts; and therefore it would seem wisest for us to leave to unprejudiced experts the solution (if there is one) of the Jutland dispute.

CHAPTER XIX

SURFACE AND SUBMERGED BLOCKADE

THE war against Philip II. lasted for fifteen years after the destruction of the Armada, and even then was prematurely concluded; the war against Louis XIV. continued for five years after La Hogue; the war against the French Revolution for eight years after the Glorious First of June; and the war against Napoleon for ten years after Trafalgar. Jutland was no exception to the rule that sea victories cannot bring land warfare to a close or even curtail its duration. The advance of an all-conquering army is not more circumscribed by the tidal low-water mark than that of an all-conquering navy by the five fathoms contour of the shoals.

On shore the legions of Prussia in the great World War seemed indomitable.

The miracle of the Marne did, at the beginning, upset the first plans which the Prussians had formed for the subjugation of France; but after this reverse they modified their schemes, and, turning against the ill-equipped soldiers of the Czar, won upon the eastern front the success which they had missed on the west. In 1915, therefore, the extremity of Russia's peril began to engage the earnest attention of her allies, and once more brought into the sharpest political focus the waterways leading to Constantinople.

At the outbreak of war Turkey had been neutral, and the Dardanelles, like the River Scheldt, remained closed to all vessels of war. But this was not for long. The Germans

had in the Mediterranean the notorious battle-cruiser *Goeben*. What line of action she contemplated nobody could predict, for the possibilities were complex. She might seek the Austrian base in the Adriatic, render unsafe the transport of French troops from North Africa, or shoot through the gut of Gibraltar and affect the whole commercial nerve-system of the globe. Against all such contingencies the British navy took precautions; but the *Goeben*, breaking the pledged word of the country she represented, violated the sanctity of international agreements, and (with military promptitude) but with unparalleled effrontery passed through the Dardanelles.

The resulting Turko-German alliance pointed to this famous sea-corridor as an available route by which to rescue Russia in the crisis of 1915. The British battleships made a valiant effort in March to push their way through without land support; and when their best efforts proved unavailing, the combined forces of the Empire immortalized themselves by their valiant seizure of footholds on Gallipoli, and by their heroic and persistent struggles to make the blood-stained Peninsula their own. The final evacuation and the consequent set-back to the allied cause in the East led many to elaborate the obvious criticism that the enemy would never have been ready at Gallipoli if the British fleet, by its unsupported premature assault, had not warned them what to expect. But it would appear juster to say that the sufferings of the Empire should in part be attributed to a culpable forgetfulness of what it owed to the navy in the Dardanelles campaign of 1878. If the "Peace with Honour" of that year had not been claimed as the ripe fruit of unaided statecraft, then Britain might have recalled the words of the sailor who lay at anchor off the Golden Horn throughout the Congress of Berlin. "Even if my battleships can force the Dardanelles, they should not be asked to do so; for until a British army holds the line of Bulair, the Sea of Marmora is a death-trap."

The evacuation of the Dardanelles led to the downfall of Serbia, and to the decision of Bulgaria to fight for the Central

Empires. Other allied reverses in the eastern theatre set the Germans at liberty to resume their onslaught on France; and the agony of Verdun, so nobly sustained, was at its height in the hour of Jutland.

That victory, like Nelson's masterpiece, did but herald new calamities ashore. In the autumn of 1916, like Austerlitz treading on the heels of Trafalgar, came Rumania's overthrow, and in the following year the ruin of Russia and the military landslide in Italy. The allied cup of misery was filled to overflowing; and the gloom above and about them blinded those, who watched the struggle ashore, to the eternal maritime verities. The British sailors would have preferred at Jutland to lay the German fleet upon ocean's bed; but by driving it completely from ocean's surface they at least afforded the world a prospect of ultimate salvation and the deliverance which comes from the sea.

This the allies may have been slow to recognize. But such an accusation cannot be levelled at their opponents. The Germans had from the beginning of the war a clear understanding that victory was impossible for them unless they could undermine British sea-power. Having, like Napoleon, small hopes of a quick decision against our battleships, they resorted in turn to various methods of destroying our merchant navy, upon which, it should be remembered, not only our own existence, but the whole future of Europe depended. Since it is only by the destruction of sea-borne commerce that naval forces can exercise the pressure employed by an army on land, the end which the Germans had in view was in theory unquestionable. But unless their battleships were prepared to fight, how was the time-honoured pressure to be exercised?

In the first phase of their commerce-destruction the Germans made use of a perfectly legitimate method—the employment of raiders and privateers. In August, 1914, they had a number of men-of-war already well placed upon the avenues of trade —the *Konigsberg* in the East Indies, the *Dresden* and the *Karlsruhe* in the West Indies, and a squadron of five under Admiral von Spee in their Chinese base at Kiao Chao. They

S. Cribb

H.M.S. "VICTORY"

Restored to her condition as at Trafalgar and wearing the Union Flag of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes

had in addition many swift vessels in New York, which they intended to arm and release, and these they hoped to supplement by raiders of all sorts from home.

The British navy was too quick for all schemes which were not fully matured, and only one raider slipped through Admiral Jellicoe's fingers, and only one got away from New York, nor was it long before both were laid by the heels. With the cruisers already at liberty the case was different, and between them they occasioned much trouble and anxiety during the first five months of the war. Captain Müller of the *Emden* detached himself from Admiral von Spee, and enlivening his leadership by ingenious ruses comparable to those of Cochrane and Drake, sent a thrill of panic through the Indian Ocean, whose shipping he raided with impunity. Admiral von Spee, keeping together the remainder of his squadron, swept through the measureless Pacific, his movements mysteriously wraithlike, his motives inscrutably obscure.

More than one British squadron thirsted for the honour of bringing him to action, and wanted nothing but knowledge of his whereabouts and time to overtake him when his whereabouts were known. But von Spee, like the defender of a besieged city, could sally from his ocean fastness at any part of its vast perimeter; and, if his intelligence was reliable, could choose that point for his sortie where opposing dispositions were weakest. When, therefore, he had been joined by the *Dresden*, he suddenly appeared off the west coast of South America in the sector of Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock, whose force was inferior to his own in numbers, in design, in speed, and in gun-power. He thus enjoyed, like a gift from fortune, that which in 1916 von Scheer in vain attempted to create—the chance of overwhelming with superior forces a detached fragment of the forces surrounding him.

The immensity of the Pacific precluded any eye but that of the British Admiralty from viewing the problem as a whole, and the Admiralty was hampered in two respects from rendering effectual aid. Admiral von Spee's fleet was composed entirely of cruisers, and in this class of ship Great Britain

(as in all preceding wars) was woefully deficient—a fault arising from a national proclivity to include in schemes of naval disarmament the indispensable guardians of maritime peace. Battleship programmes, as a rule, may be arranged to balance or counterbalance activities elsewhere; but cruiser requirements should be by Britain computed (though this has never been the case) on the volume of trade to be protected and the number of routes to be patrolled. In 1914 the demand for cruisers exceeded all recorded instances. Not only was the amount of seaborne trade unprecedented, not only did its paths cross and recross the globe as inextricably as the meshes of a net, not only were the flotilla needs of the Grand Fleet exacting and imperative, but the glorious gallantry of the Dominions and the Indian Empire necessitated the safe-conduct of countless transports, and imposed upon our cruiser organization a grievous burden beneath which it might excusably have collapsed. The marvel is that so much was accomplished, so little left undone.

To strengthen the weak link in the Pacific chain, and insure against eventualities, the Admiralty sent to Sir Christopher a battleship—the *Canopus*—which they intended him to use as a floating fortress to cover his feebler units. But even as she neared her destination a second difficulty confronted them—the difficulty of keeping *secret* touch with a commander-in-chief at the Antipodes. To shift the *Canopus* from mid-Atlantic to South was well within the range of open wireless, but to explain the nature and scope of her mission required a less restricted method of thought transference. The *Canopus* proved a puzzle to Admiral Cradock, who, without a thought for his own safety, could not understand what use to make of her. She could not keep up with his cruisers, and without employing his fastest ships he could not overhaul von Spee. In his perplexity he clung to his one certain clue—that the Admiralty desired von Spee's destruction. He therefore discarded the *Canopus* with the gesture of a champion who flings his shield away the better to wield his sword. He sought out von Spee; and finding him near Coronel on 1st November, immediately endeavoured to close

the range. The German Admiral, with every advantage save one, declined action till evening threw its cloak around him, and the setting sun behind the English ships silhouetted them like targets against the western sky. Then satisfied that he could give, without receiving, punishment, he opened fire with his unanswerable weapons, and the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth*, fighting till the waves closed over them, went down with their colours flying.

The news of the catastrophe came at the time as a severe shock to the whole Empire, suggesting horrible thoughts of British failure and German superiority at sea; but in retrospect the battle of Coronel takes another shape. It presents a picture, it is true, of misunderstanding, and misunderstanding is prodigal of tears. But it presents a picture also of one who could have declined action and preferred to seek it; one who had been urged into sanctuary and scorned all safeguard but honour; one who courted death, and with Richard Grenville will live for ever in England's memory.

Faced with a situation of undoubted seriousness, the Admiralty acted with promptitude and daring. They detached from the North Sea command two battle cruisers, and sent them out, under Admiral Sturdee, to re-establish British prestige. Admiral Sturdee had a station area which stretched from the Amazon to Cape Horn, and from Cape Horn to China; and those who mapped it out for him may well have expected him to circle the globe and circle it again before he ran his quarry to earth. Admiral Sturdee sailed on 11th November; and uniting with his flag the smaller British cruisers in the South Atlantic, made Stanley Harbour in the Falkland Isles on the afternoon of 7th December. He had traversed in less than a month something like eight thousand miles, and his ships' companies needed rest and his hard-worked engines fuel. Admiral Sturdee announced his intention of pushing on at once, and without letting his fires out ordered coaling to proceed apace. He intended to sweep round Cape Horn and search the coast of Chile, where Admiral Cradock fought his last fight.

Fortune rewards those who are worthy of her favours. On

8th December, a few hours after the British fleet's arrival, with one of the magic threads which her fingers love to spin, she drew to the entrance of Stanley Harbour the very force which Admiral Sturdee had come out to find. The process of coaling was incomplete; but plans were cut and dried, and every British captain had his orders and knew what to do. Like Boscawen in the famous campaign of Lagos, Admiral Sturdee unkennelled his pack in record time and laid them on the trail. Like Boscawen he signalled "General Chase"; for von Spee, detecting a force as superior to his own as his own had been superior to Cradock's, immediately altered all his plans and fled while flight seemed possible. Admiral Sturdee worked up a speed sufficient for his purpose, and at 11.30 in the forenoon, like Lord Howe before his most famous fight, piped all hands to dinner.

The German Admiral had eight vessels with him, and these, falling into three different categories, diverged in three directions. Admiral Sturdee's masterly arrangements, however, covered all such complexities, and before night he had accounted for no less than six of the eight ships opposed to him. One small auxiliary managed to escape, and the *Dresden* (light cruiser) had speed sufficient to baffle the British pursuit. Admiral von Spee, and every ship with him, fought with a gallantry and determination which stand in marked contrast to the German navy's otherwise fixed resolve not willingly to give battle unless assured of success. But throughout the pursuit and the well-fought battle von Spee was opposed by superior forces and by a skill which left nothing unachieved. The British sailors, alike in the vigour with which they fought their foes and the chivalry with which they succoured them after defeat, sustained the highest traditions of the service; and the full-rigged ship, under all sail, which crossed the battle-field on which they triumphed might have been a vessel from Trafalgar or Quiberon come in person to seal their deeds with her approval.

No battle ever fought at sea was more decisive than the Falkland Isles. In Nelson's words, it was not a victory but an annihilation. And being fought on an issue exclusively

maritime its results in a naval sense were immediately apparent. Safety was restored to the outer ocean highways, and the struggle of the belligerent fleets was confined to the North Sea area. The *Dresden*, which alone survived to tell the story, and which was doomed to an early demise, was the last of the greater German raiders. The *Karlsruhe* had already committed suicide, the *Königsberg* had been driven up the Rufiji river and lay on the mud awaiting her end, and the *Emden* had fought her last fight with the Australian cruiser *Sydney*. Once more the seven seas submitted themselves to the keeping of Britain, and the ships of the allies passed where they would without undue anxiety.

But the Germans would not accept this state of things. The war, if it was to be won, must be ruthlessly pressed home against Britain, and Britain was vulnerable only in her ships. Admiral Sturdee's sweeping victory had cleared the sea of surface raiders. Commerce-destruction henceforth must be conducted by means of the submarine.

International law recognized the right of belligerents to overhaul merchantmen and confiscate them, so long as the non-combatants working the ships received the treatment to which by immemorial usage they were entitled. But the submarine could neither carry prizes into port nor find room on board for any crew but her own. If commerce-destruction was to be executed by the submarines, then not only would all captured merchantmen have to be sunk, but the non-combatants who manned them must be left to drown. Had the mind of man been able to foresee that the Germans, in their desperation, would throw all moral codes to the winds, merchantmen would have been armed for self-protection as they had been before the days of Blake. But the commercial navies of the world, under the century-long Pax Britannica, had ceased to carry weapons, and were as helpless as sheep before their ruthless assailants.

Such, then, was the German submerged blockade of 1915. The merchant ships of Britain and her allies were doomed to destruction in waters, the surface of which our battle-fleets still commanded, by craft which could navigate those waters

without being seen. The year, in consequence, was made hideous by appalling tragedies, among which the sinking of the *Lusitania* stands out pre-eminent. In every land and clime where regard was still paid to honour, to virtue, and to decency, the atrocities of the German submarines were reprobated and condemned. But the sensation they caused must not be allowed to screen from us the real result of this illegitimate campaign. From the strategic standpoint the new German method of commerce-destruction proved a complete failure; that is to say, after twelve months' persistence in heinous outrage, the raiders had diminished the volume of British trade by a degree that was practically imperceptible.

So the second year ended. In the third year—1916—the Germans, as we have seen, took an entirely new line, and, giving audience to von Scheer, determined to try his scheme of luring part of the Grand Fleet away from Admiral Jellicoe and destroying it by ambuscade. The plan was frustrated on the field of Jutland; and the German Higher Command, like Napoleon after Trafalgar, resolved never again to countenance the direct method of challenging the British fleet. The conquest of Rumania in the autumn gave the Central Empires rich supplies of much that Britain's own surface blockade had hitherto denied them, but already they were well forward in their preparations for a plan calculated to "stagger humanity."

The last round of the maritime struggle with Britain began at the beginning of 1917, and took the form of unrestricted underwater blockade. The scheme deserves comparison with the famous paper blockade of Napoleon, and like that celebrated thrust came very near to inflicting upon Britain the mortal wound which her enemies desired. The war, it must be understood, had been in progress for thirty months, and throughout that period the German submarine in a material sense had been steadily improving. In 1914 she had been a fragile, timid craft, playing a precarious game, with nothing certain save the necessity of keeping near home; with no weapon save a torpedo or two, whose discharge rendered her innocuous. But in February, 1917, she had grown to the size of a small merchantman, with all the carrying capacity

which supplies and armament demanded, and with an effective range of thousands of miles.

When the war broke out the world possessed, in all, eight thousand ocean-going merchantmen, and of these one-half belonged to Britain. The Germans reckoned—and reckoned rightly—that with less than five-eighths of the British ocean tonnage the allied cause would collapse. If, then, the German super-submarine could account for three-eighths before another winter set in, the war was as good as won. There seemed to the advocates of the submerged blockade only one possible drawback. There were now so many hunters pursuing the submarine that she could no longer with safety make surface observations, and was obliged to rely on her periscope. Her periscope as an organ of vision was, to say the least of it, short-sighted; and if the campaign was to be a real success, then every ship in British waters would have to be sunk irrespective of nationality, and such wholesale carnage would in all probability persuade America to join the allies. It was a grave risk, but unless Britain were strangled, the German armies fought in vain; and if the British ships were sunk briskly enough, the armed legions of America would never be able to cross the Atlantic.

Someone, perhaps, will argue that by this time Britain was acquainted with her danger, and was doubtless arming her merchantmen and building new tonnage to take the place of that destroyed. But this unhappily was not the case. The Zeppelin raids had created a wholesale demand for anti-aircraft ordnance, and the guns which should have protected the merchant service were lavished on inland towns. Moreover, recruiting zeal had almost emptied the waterside yards, and British shipbuilding had declined seventy-five per cent. and threatened to cease altogether. Britain was not prepared for the intensive submarine campaign; and when, in the first three months of its operation, the Germans sank 470 big ships of the five hundred they bargained for, Hindenburg was almost justified in making his confident assertion that British sea-suzerainty had been overthrown.

So great was the panic in this maritime "Reign of Terror"

that the neutral nations forsook the seas, and the Germans perhaps in their heart of hearts hoped that British ships would do the same. Certainly their methods would have shattered the morale of any other ocean race. But though the mortality reached the appalling figure of one in fifteen, the crews of the British merchantmen with a sublime courage conducted business as usual, often without so much as a single gun to defend themselves and their ship.

Their dauntless intrepidity gave the bare margin of time in which to find a road to salvation; and before the summer of 1917 was far advanced, an effective counter was mercifully found to the German submerged blockade. British fighting ships came to guard and protect the British merchantmen; and the Destroyers, built for destruction, founded a new order of chivalry, reducing speed to lead their convoy through infested waters, and exposing themselves daily to mines and submarines in order to shield the defenceless. So the two sea-services worked hand in hand as in the days of old.

They were joined in the hour of adversity by the fighting ships of the United States of North America, who (as the Germans had foreseen) were drawn into the war by the intolerable affront of the intensive submerged blockade. The American destroyers were friends in need, and therefore friends indeed; and as time went on, the Emergency Committee on the other side of the Atlantic created new shipping at a rate amounting to three million tons per annum. By the spring of 1918 merchant ships were actually being built more quickly than the Germans could destroy them. For all that, the perils of the sea remained; and on 23rd April, St. George's Day, Sir Roger Keyes and the daring spirits of the Dover Patrol set out to "twist the dragon's tail."

Bruges had been converted by the Germans into a grand depôt and headquarters of the submerged "Terror." Daily (almost hourly) fresh submarines constructed there were shot through the canals which reached North Sea orifices at Zeebrugge and Ostend. To draw the sting from these two places would have been a work of grave difficulty, even if an army could have been released from other theatres, and even if that

DRAKE'S WAY

ZEEBRUGGE. ST. GEORGE'S DAY, 1918

ADMIRAL DRAKE (*to Admiral Keyes*). "BRAVO, SIR! TRADITION HOLDS MY MEN SINGED A KING'S BEARD, AND YOURS HAVE SINGED A KAISER'S MOUSTACHES."

The contrast between the feeling of Mr. Bernard Partridge's cartoon and that by Gillray facing page 200 is interesting.

(*By special permission of the Proprietors of* PUNCH.)

army could have been put ashore and could have overcome the coast defences. Failing military assistance, the Dover Patrol, by itself, strangled in the darkness the terror of Bruges; and choking the gullets of Ostend and Zeebrugge, pushed back the U-boat base of operations three hundred miles from our coast. The concerted attack upon the Mole, the railway viaduct, and the canal at Zeebrugge, described by a French historian as the "finest feat of arms in the naval history of all times and all countries," deserves to rank for its daring beside the wonder-deeds of Drake, and for the completeness of its success beside the lightning-strokes of Nelson.

The triumphant assault upon the all but impregnable defences of Zeebrugge was welcomed at the time as indicating that the British navy was at last assuming a bold "offensive." We must be on our guard lest we are misled by such fallacious reasoning. However intrépid it may have been, it was designed to blunt the enemy's weapon, and was therefore properly defensive in character. Besides, from the outset of the war Britain had never ceased to conduct a crippling offensive against the Central Empires in the only maritime mode which she could employ against military states; that is to say, in the ever-growing pressure of her own surface blockade. It is difficult even now to gauge or measure the full efficacy of this. Indeed, the only standard of calculation is the anxiety of the German Higher Command to retaliate in kind. The savagery of their submarine campaign reflects the measure of the anger of the Central Empires at our navy's exclusion of the vital commodities on which their salvation depended.

The British surface blockade in its opening stages was insufficiently stringent; but this fault was due not to misplaced tenderness, but to the accepted rules governing blockade in 1914. For a twelvemonth after the first shot was fired it was impossible to observe international obligations and do more than exclude munitions of war. There was nothing to prevent contiguous countries from buying in the markets open to them, and re-importing their purchases into Germany. It was not until the Germans attempted, by methods incon-

sistent with the rules of war, to destroy the British mercantile marine that Great Britain felt compelled to " ration " neutral powers in their import of commodities likely to help the enemy to prolong the war. The process of " rationing " was arbitrary, but enormously strengthened Britain's naval power. In the winter following Jutland it looked as if Germany would be compelled to surrender ; and though in the period of intensive inhumanity she decided to ignore all moral considerations rather than sink herself, the failure of the U-boat confronted her with ruin and she asked for an armistice sooner than face the winter of 1918.

As in the Napoleonic war, the neutral nations found themselves ill-treated by both belligerents, and complained somewhat unduly of Britain. The submerged blockade was at least consistent with Prussian blood and iron. But Britain prided herself on her respect for international law, and yet appeared to forget the maritime tolerance of which in the nineteenth century she had made herself the Apostle. There was a cry, which found echo from many parts of the world, for the " Freedom of the seas." If this plea be rightly interpreted, it meant that the Pax Britannica ought to be the fashion in war just as much as in peace. The argument overlooks the fact that Britain established the freedom of the seas by using the surface blockade to overthrow tyrants in the past ; and only by using the surface blockade against the Germans could she guarantee that the traditions which she herself had created should be handed on to posterity.

In this great struggle for freedom history in many ways repeated itself. As in the sixteenth century, the entire maritime population of these islands answered their country's call. Half the tonnage of the mercantile marine was requisitioned for warlike purposes ; and of the merchant seamen, those who lost their lives outnumbered eight times the total casualties at the battle of Trafalgar. As in the seventeenth century, the number of new ships laid down eclipsed all records, and the 842 additional keels which the navy demanded will bear comparison with the shipbuilding total even in the time of Blake. As in the eighteenth century, the strangle-grip of

our battleships on all the pathways of the sea made it an easy matter to occupy the colonial and oversea possessions belonging to the enemy. German East Africa, German South-West Africa, the Cameroons, Togoland, and the German islands in the Pacific—these were the aftermath of British sea-power. The German military forces defending them, however plucky and sustained their defence, were like besieged garrisons who had no quarter from which they could possibly expect relief. The destruction of the British navy alone could have rescued them. The triumph of the British navy ensured their downfall.

More spectacular than these examples was the repetition of what occurred in 1799, when a powerful battle-fleet, declining further obedience to military dictators, submitted itself tamely to the sea-power of Britain.* The German Higher Command, smarting under memories of Jutland, steadfastly declined to utilize the High Seas Fleet while any hope remained elsewhere. But when Turkey, Bulgaria, and Austria, one after another collapsed, they turned to the navy as to a forlorn hope, and worked out a plan for big ships and submarines acting in combination. On 29th October, 1918, the order to weigh was given at Wilhelmshaven, but led at once to open mutiny. The outbreak was far too serious to be suppressed, and therefore brought ruin to all concerned in it. On 20th November, the German submarines surrendered at Harwich to Commodore Tyrwhitt; and on the following day the battleships, battle cruisers, and destroyers yielded themselves to Admiral Beatty, off the Firth of Forth. The larger vessels were temporarily interned, pending a decision as to their fate; but on 21st June, 1919, they scuttled themselves and sank at Scapa Flow.

The work done by the British people during the great World War transcended any previous effort made by them, even in the prolonged duel with Napoleon. For not only did the fleet sustain the lion's share of the struggle at sea, but the Empire raised an army numbering eight millions to support the struggle ashore. The magnitude and breadth

* See above, page 201.

of the British effort was not, however, sufficiently recognized either during or after the war by those nations whose contribution to the cause of civilization was in the main of a military character. The immunity of Great Britain and her Dominions from invasion was contrasted with the sufferings of Continental powers, without reference to oceanic factors. Allied demands for maritime transport during the war persistently ignored the fact that British shipping was not inexhaustible; and allied demands, when the war was ended, quite overlooked the fact that much of the German depredations ashore should be written off as against the appalling destruction of British sea-borne commerce. When the war broke out Britain possessed about twenty million tons of merchant shipping: during the war by illicit methods she was robbed of nearly eight million tons. The history of the world supplies no parallel to such losses.

That a sacrifice so memorable should be overlooked seems strange in itself, and stranger still when we remember that, not England only, but the entire allied cause depended on the ministrations of the patient merchantmen. Yet those who forget may, if they please, transfer the blame elsewhere. Ocean itself is in large measure responsible; ocean which, alike in storm and calm, bears no traces of the warfare that has raged over its surface. On land the broken column and the crumbling arch, the memorial bronze and the sepulchral mound, will guide the traveller to historic scenes where nations battled for the mastery. But at sea there can be no such pilgrimage. The grey waters keep for ever their secrets undivulged; and even the shaken sunlight can hardly filter down to where the green and amber seaweed sways with the tide over the whitening bones of men and the twisted limbs of ships.

CHRONOLOGY

875.	Alfred, commanding in person at sea, engages seven pirates (scip-hlaertha).
882.	Alfred, after a hard fight, captures four Danish ships.
897.	Alfred constructs galleys of forty (perhaps sixty) oars.
901.	Death of Alfred.
1066.	Norman Conquest.
1271–95.	Marco Polo and his kinsmen travel overland to the Orient and unfold its marvels.
c. 1280.	Mariner's Compass in general use.
c. 1280.	"Hereford Map."
1295.	Earliest mention of the "Admiral" or Sea Viceroy.
1311.	Earliest dated Portolano or Sea Chart.
1340. 24 June.	Battle of Sluys.
1350. 29 Aug.	Battle of Les Espagnols sur Mer (near Winchelsea).
1375.	Earliest documentary reference to Artillery. "Grand Canon" of Caen.
1370–7.	Constant complaints in Parliament of decay of British shipping.
1400.	High Court of Admiralty established.
1410.	The *Christopher of the Tower* mounts the earliest naval ordnance.
1415.	Agincourt. England's ambitions for continental dominion.
1419.	Prince Henry the Navigator inaugurates Portuguese sea-enterprise.
c. 1435.	*The Libelle of English Policy.*
1451.	Columbus born at Genoa.
1453.	Fall of Constantinople. Beginnings of modern history.
1457.	Johan Müller completes tables of the sun's declination, 1457–1566.
1478.	Columbus settles at Lisbon.
1480.	The Astrolabe adapted to sea-uses by Behaim of Nürnberg.
1485. 22 Aug.	Accession of Henry VII., England's first maritime ruler.
1485.	First Navigation Act.

1486.	Work begun upon the *Regent*.
1488. Feb.	Bartholomew Diaz " turns the heel " of Africa.
1491.	Launch of the *Regent*.
1492.	Behaim of Nürnberg constructs the first Globe.
1492. 3 Aug.–1493. 15 Mar.	Columbus's First Voyage.
1493.	Pope Alexander VI. draws his " Line."
1493.	Rupture of commercial relations between England and the Netherlands.
1495–6.	First Dry Dock constructed at Portsmouth.
1496.	The " Magnus Intercursus " settles the dispute with the Netherlands.
1497.	*Sweepstake* and *Mary Fortune* completed.
1497.	John Cabot's first voyage.
1498.	Vasco da Gama reaches India by sea.
1498.	John Cabot's second voyage.
1499.	Sebastian Cabot conducts Henry VII.'s third transatlantic expedition.
1499–1501.	Voyages of Ojeda and Bastidas.
1502–4.	Columbus's last voyage.
1505.	Almeida appointed Viceroy of the Indies.
1505.	Henry VII. still equipping transatlantic voyages.
1506.	Death of Columbus.
1509.	Death of Henry VII. Accession of Henry VIII.
1509.	Work begun on the *Mary Rose*, the first English ship to carry heavy guns.
1509.	Work begun on new dockyards at Woolwich and Deptford.
1509.	Albuquerque succeeds Almeida as Viceroy of the Indies.
1512.	Henry VIII. pays Popenruyter of Mechlin for heavy guns.
1512.	Destruction of the *Regent*. Work begun on the *Henri Grace à Dieu*.
1513.	Balbao discovers the Pacific.
1514.	*Henri Grace à Dieu* completed.
1517.	The Portuguese reach China by sea and open trade relations.
1519–22.	Magellan's *Victoria* sails round the world.
1519–22.	Cortez conquers Mexico.
1531.	Pizarro conquers Peru.
1530–2.	William Hawkins conducts commercial ventures to Brazil.
1546.	Henry VIII. institutes the " Navy Board " for the maintenance of the fleet.
1547.	Death of Henry VIII.

1548.		Sebastian Cabot returns to England and advocates the revival of Henry VII.'s maritime policy.
1552.		Rupture of commercial relations with the Hansa.
1553.		Foundation of the Muscovy Company.
1553.		Willoughby and Chancellor set out to find the North-East Passage.
1557.		Final revocation of Hanseatic privileges.
1558.		Accession of Elizabeth.
1562–3.		First voyage of John Hawkins to the West Indies.
1564–5.		Second voyage of John Hawkins to the West Indies.
1568.	23 Sept	Hawkins's third voyage ends in tragedy at San Juan de Ulloa.
1569.		Mercator advocates a plane projection of sea charts.
1571.	7 Oct.	The Battle of Lepanto, both sides still employing Galleys.
1572.	24 May–	Drake's adventures on the Isthmus of Darien.
1573.	9 Aug.	
1573.		Bourne's *Regiment of the Sea*, the first English treatise on Navigation.
1576–8.		Frobisher's three voyages to the North-West.
1577.		John Hawkins, chairman of the Navy Board, "creates" the *Revenge*.
1577.	15 Nov.–	Drake's voyage of Circumnavigation.
1580.	4 Oct.	
1581.		Spain conquers Portugal.
1583.		Gilbert attempts to colonize Newfoundland.
1585.		Raleigh's first Virginian enterprise (Captains Amadas and Barlow).
1585–7.		John Davis's three voyages to find the North-West Passage.
1585.		Anglo-Spanish War begins.
1585.		Lord Howard of Effingham appointed Admiral, or Maritime Viceroy of England.
1585.	Dec.–	Drake attacks and captures San Domingo.
1586.	Feb.	
1586.	Feb.– Mar.	Drake attacks and captures Carthagena.
1587.	29 April	Drake's victory at Cadiz closes the Galley Epoch.
1588.	30 May	The Armada sets sail.
1588.	21 July.	Battle of Plymouth.
1588.	23 July.	Battle of Portland.
1588.	25 July.	Battle of the Isle of Wight.
1588.	27 July.	The Armada anchors in Calais Roads,
1588.	28 July.	and is dislodged by fireships.
1588.	29 July.	Battle of Gravelines.
1588.	30 July.	The wind shifts.

1588.	3 Aug.	English see the last of the Armada.
1588.	11 Sept.	Medina Sidonia reaches Spain.
1588.	Dec. (?)	Chatham Chest founded for the relief of distressed seamen.
1589.	18 April–2 July	The Counter-Armada. Drake and Norris invade Spain.
1589.		Richard Hakluyt publishes his *Principal Navigations*.
1591.	31 July.	Last fight of the *Revenge*.
1594.		Edward Wright (of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge) makes Mercator's discovery of practical use.
1594.		John Davis perfects his Quadrant.
1595.	6 Feb.–28 Aug.	Raleigh explores Guiana.
1595.	28 Aug.–	Last voyage of Hawkins and Drake.
1596.	28 Jan.	
1596.	1 June–10 Aug.	Fresh invasion of Spain. Sack of Cadiz.
1597.	16 Sept.	Raleigh captures Fayal in the Azores.
1599.		Birth of Robert Blake.
1600.		Foundation of East India Company.
1601.		First voyage of East India Company.
1603.		Death of Queen Elizabeth.
1603.		Raleigh convicted as a Pro-Spaniard and condemned to death.
1604.	18 Aug.	James I. makes Peace with Spain.
1607.		Permanent settlement of Virginia.
1609.	March.	Hugo Groot publishes his *Mare Liberum*.
1609.	April.	Twelve years' truce between Holland and Spain.
1610.		Launch of the *Prince Royal*.
1610-11.		Discovery of Hudson's Bay and death of Hudson.
1613.		James I. forgoes the right to the Salute.
1615–25.		Blake at Oxford.
1616.		Baffin pronounces the North-West Passage impracticable as a commercial route to India.
1616.	March.	Raleigh, released from the Tower, revisits Guiana on a commercial venture commissioned by the Crown.
1616.		Napier's Bones (Logarithmic tables).
1618.	29 Oct.	James I. executes Raleigh at the bidding of Spain.
1618.		Spain starts a fresh European War.
1618.		James I. elevates Buckingham to be Admiral.
1620.		The *Mayflower* sails. Foundation of New England.
1620–3.		The Dutch expel the English from the Indies.
1623.	27 Feb.	Massacre of Amboyna.
1624.	29 May.	News of the Massacre reaches England.
1625.	27 Mar.	Death of James I. Accession of Charles I.

1625.	5 Oct.–23 Dec.	Wimbledon's expedition to Cadiz.
1627.	27 June–12 Nov.	Buckingham's expedition to Rhé.
1628.	23 Aug.	The Lord High Admiral murdered at Portsmouth.
1629.		Charles I. concludes peace with France, and
1630.		with Spain.
1631.		Barbary corsairs land in Ireland and carry off 237 victims to toil at the oar.
1631.		Royal fleet chased by alien privateers.
1634.		First Ship Money writs.
1635.	May–Oct.	"Ship Money" fleet cruises in the Channel.
1635.	Dec.	Publication of Selden's *Mare Clausum*.
1635.		Ship Money writs applied to inland counties and boroughs.
1636.	16 Jan.	Keel of the *Sovereign of the Seas* laid.
1636.		National outcry against Ship Money.
1637.	Oct.	Charles I. launches the *Sovereign of the Seas*.
1638.		Hampden's case is heard.
1639.	21 Oct.	Tromp destroys a Spanish fleet of 70 ships in the Downs in defiance of neutrality laws and the presence of the Ship Money fleet.
1641.		The Long Parliament pronounces Ship Money illegal.
1642–5.		First Civil War. The fleet sides with Parliament.
1648.		The fleet changes sides. Outbreak of Second Civil War.
1648.		Blockade of London.
1649.	30 Jan.	Execution of Charles I.
1649.		Rupert's Commerce-Destruction Campaign.
1649.		Commissioners appointed to execute the office of Lord High Admiral.
1649.	23 Feb.	Robert Blake appointed to command at sea.
1649.	May–Nov.	Blake's campaign against Rupert.
1649.	12 May.	The English Ambassador murdered on arrival in the Dutch capital.
1650.	March.	Blake initiates the blockade of Lisbon.
1650.	26 July.	Blake defeats the joint forces of Rupert and John IV.
1650.	14 Sept.	Blake destroys the Portuguese fleet home-returning from Brazil.
1650.	5 Nov.	Blake destroys Rupert's fleet off Carthagena.
1650–1.		Spain and Portugal recognize the Commonwealth.
1651.	27 Mar.	British Ambassadors, St. John and Strickland, publicly insulted on their arrival at the Hague.
1651.	9 Oct.	Second Navigation Act.
1652.	19 May.	Blake demands the Salute from Tromp. Battle of Dover.

1652.	28 Sept.	Battle of the Kentish Knock.
1652.	Sept.	Blake destroys a French fleet off Dunkirk.
1652.	30 Nov.	Battle of the Ness. First clear differentiation between fighting-ships and merchantmen.
1652.	Dec.	France recognizes the Commonwealth.
1652.	25 Dec.	Articles of War first formulated.
1653.		Board of Admiralty issues earliest manual of tactics (" Fighting Instructions ").
1653.		First definition of " Able " Seaman.
1653.	18–20 Feb.	Battle of Portland.
1653.	2–4 June.	Battle of the Gabbard.
1653.	31 June.	Battle of Scheveningen.
1654.	5 April.	Treaty of Westminster ends the First Dutch War.
1655.	4 April.	Blake destroys the navy of Tunis at Porto Farina.
1655.		Conquest of Jamaica by Penn and Venables.
1657.	20 April.	Blake destroys the Spanish fleet at Santa Cruz.
1657.	7 Aug.	Death of Blake.
1660.		The Restoration. Fighting fleets designated " Royal Navy." Pepys becomes Clerk of the Acts, *i.e.* permanent secretary of Navy Board.
1660.		Third Navigation Act.
1660.		The title " General at Sea " superseded by that of Admiral.
1660–4.		English commercial activity and growth of Chartered Companies, *e.g.* Hudson's Bay Co.
1661.	7 May.	" King's Letter Boys " (or Gentlemen Volunteers) ensure a supply of naval officers.
1661.		Charles II. obtains Bombay and Tangier by his marriage with Catherine of Portugal.
1664.		Conquest of New Amsterdam from the Dutch. Settlement rechristened New York. Beginning of Second Dutch War.
1665.	3 June.	Battle of Lowestoft. Great Plague.
1666.	1–4 June.	Four Days' Battle.
1666.	25 July.	Battle of St. James's Day.
1666.	8–9 Aug.	" Holmes's Bonfire." Wholesale destruction of Dutch merchant shipping.
1667.	10–13 June.	De Ruyter's Raid on the Medway.
1667.	June.	Louis XIV. conquers the Spanish Netherlands.
1667.	July.	Peace of Breda ends the Second Dutch War.
1670.		By Secret Treaty of Dover Charles II. agrees to loan the Royal Navy to Louis XIV.
1672.	28 May.	Beginning of Third Dutch War. Battle of Solebay.
1673.	28 May.	First battle of the Schoonveldt.
1673.	4 June.	Second battle of the Schoonveldt.

1673.	11 Aug.	Battle of the Texel.
1673.		Pepys becomes secretary to the Lord High Admiral.
1674.		England withdraws from the war.
1674–5.		Greenwich Observatory founded.
1677.	18 Dec.	Qualifying Examination instituted for Lieutenants, R.N.
1678.		Peace of Nymwegen ends the Franco-Dutch war.
1685–8.		James II. and Pepys regenerate the Royal Navy.
1688.	5 Nov.	William III. lands in Torbay.
1688.	23 Dec.	Flight of James II.
1688.		End of Pepys's naval administration.
1689.		Beginning of the English Succession War, or War of the League of Augsburg.
1689.	1 May.	Battle of Bantry Bay.
1689.	28 July.	Leake relieves Londonderry.
1689.	25 Oct.	Bill of Rights. Bloodless Revolution.
1690.	30 June.	Battle of Beachy Head.
1690.	Dec.	Court Martial on Torrington.
1692.	19 May.	Battle of Barfleur.
1692.	23–24 May.	Battle of La Hogue.
1694.		Greenwich Palace converted into a Hospital for Seamen.
1697.		Peace of Ryswick ends the English Succession War.
1697.		*L'Art des Armées Navales* : first book on naval tactics.
1702.		Beginning of Spanish Succession War.
1702.	July–Oct.	Leake destroys the French settlements and fisheries in Newfoundland.
1702.	Aug.–Sept.	Rooke and Ormonde attempt to secure Cadiz as a naval base.
1702.	12 Oct.	Battle of Vigo Bay.
1703.		Anglo-Portuguese Alliance. Loan of Lisbon as naval base.
1703.	27 Nov.	Mediterranean fleet returning late in the year is destroyed by the Great Storm.
1704.	23–24 July.	Capture of Gibraltar by Sir George Rooke.
1704.	13 Aug.	Battle of Malaga.
1704.	25 Oct.	Leake destroys the French flotilla and relieves Gibraltar.
1705.	10 Mar.	Battle of Marbella. Leake again relieves Gibraltar.
1705.	3 Oct.	Shovell captures Barcelona.
1706.	30 April.	Leake relieves Barcelona.
1706.	May.	Leake, looking for the ideal base, captures Carthagena,
1706.	July.	and Alicante,
1706.	Sept.	and Iviza and Majorca.

1707.	22 Oct.	Shovell returning from the Mediterranean late in the year is cast away off the Scillies.
1708.		Leake captures Sardinia, and finds the ideal base in Minorca, which he captures also.
1710.		Commodore Martin captures Nova Scotia.
1711.		Failure of combined operations against Quebec.
1713.		Peace of Utrecht ends the Spanish Succession War.
1729.		Royal Naval Academy founded at Portsmouth to supersede "King's Letter Boys," cp. 1661.
1731.		Hadley's Quadrant supersedes Davis's, cp. 1594.
1739.		Beginning of Jenkins' Ear War.
1739.	21 Nov.	Vernon captures Porto Bello.
1740.		Outbreak of Austrian Succession War.
1740–4.		Anson's Voyage of Circumnavigation.
1741.	Mar.–Apr.	Failure of combined operations against Carthagena.
1744.	11 Feb.	Battle of Toulon.
1744–62.		Anson at the Admiralty.
1745.	17 June.	Admiral Warren captures Louisbourg.
1746.		Admiral Vernon cashiered for public exposure of lower-deck grievances.
1747.		Court Martial on Admiral Mathews.
1747.	3 May.	First Battle of Finisterre.
1747.	14 Oct.	Second Battle of Finisterre.
1748.		Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle closes the wars of Austrian Succession and Jenkins' Ear.
1748.		Uniform for Officers adopted.
1756.		Outbreak of Seven Years' War.
1756.	12 April.	French invading force sails for Minorca.
1756.	20 May.	Battle of Minorca (Byng *v.* Galissonière).
1756.	21 June.	"Black Hole."
1756.	Oct.	Admiral Watson sails from Madras to effect the relief of Calcutta.
1756.	28 Dec.–	Court Martial on Admiral Byng.
1757.	27 Jan.	
1757.	14 Mar.	Admiral Byng shot on board the *Monarque*.
1757.		Captain Campbell's "Sextant" supersedes the Quadrant.
1758.	26 July.	Boscawen captures Louisbourg for the second time.
1759.	23 July.	Keel of the *Victory* laid.
1759.	June–Sept.	Saunders' operations in the St. Lawrence.
1759.	18 Aug.	Battle of Lagos.
1759.	18 Sept.	Capitulation of Quebec.
1759.	20 Nov.	Battle of Quiberon Bay.
1760.		Death of George II. Accession of George III.

1761.	June.	Keppel captures Belleisle wherewith to redeem Minorca.
1763.		Peace of Paris concludes the Seven Years' War.
1763.		*Tactique Navale*, an advanced treatise on naval warfare, published in France, cp. 1697.
1765.	7 May.	Launch of H.M.S. *Victory*.
1769.		Captain Cook explores and in the name of Britain annexes New Zealand.
1773–5.		Captain Cook circumnavigates the Antarctic continent.
1775.		Opening of War of American Independence.
1778.		France joins the Americans.
1778.	27 July.	Battle of Ushant.
1778.	Dec.	Admiral Barrington captures St. Lucia.
1779.		Spain joins the Americans.
1779.	6 July.	Battle of Grenada.
1780.	16 Jan.	The Moonlight Battle, or First Battle of St. Vincent.
1780.	Jan.	Rodney relieves Gibraltar and Minorca.
1780.	17 April.	Battle of Martinique.
1780.		Armed Neutrality of the North.
1780.	Dec.	Holland swells the number of Britain's enemies.
1781.	March.	Admiral Darby relieves Gibraltar.
1781.	5 Sept.	Battle of the Chesapeake.
1781.	18 Oct.	Surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown.
1781.	Dec.	Kempenfelt defeats the French fleet.
1782.	March.	Second Loss of Minorca.
1782.	12 April.	Battle of the Saints.
1782.	12 April.	First "Signal Book."
1782.	11 Oct.	Lord Howe relieves Gibraltar.
1782.	20 Oct.	Battle of Cape Spartel.
1783.		Treaty of Versailles concludes the War of American Independence.
1789.		Outbreak of the French Revolution.
1792.		Beginnings of the Revolutionary War.
1793.		Great Britain joins the "First Coalition" against France.
1793.	27 Aug.	Lord Hood occupies Toulon.
1793.	19 Dec.	Lord Hood evacuates Toulon.
1794.	28 May–1 June.	The Glorious First of June.
1794.	10 July.	Lord Hood's conquest of Corsica. Nelson loses the sight of his right eye at Calvi.
1794.	11 Oct.	Lord Hood returns to England, leaving the Mediterranean fleet to Admiral Hotham.
1795.	14 Mar.	Battle of the Gulf of Genoa.

1795.	23 June.	Battle of L'Orient.
1795.	13 July.	Battle of Hyères.
1795.	29 Nov.	Admiral Jervis takes over the Mediterranean command.
1796.		Lord Keith captures the Cape of Good Hope.
1796.	Oct.	Spain makes an alliance with France rendering the Mediterranean untenable.
1797.	14 Feb.	Battle of St. Vincent.
1797.	April.	Mutiny at Spithead.
1797.	May.	Mutiny at the Nore.
1797.	24 July.	Nelson loses his right arm at Santa Cruz, cp. 1657.
1797.	Oct.	Downfall of First Coalition.
1797.	11 Oct.	Battle of Camperdown.
1797.		Clerk of Eldin publishes *An Essay on Naval Tactics*, the first work of its kind in English.
1798.	May.	Napoleon seizes Malta from the Knights of St. John.
1798.	1 Aug.	Battle of the Nile.
1798.	Nov.	Duckworth takes Minorca.
1798.	Nov.	Second Coalition against Revolutionary France.
1799.	3 Mar.–20 May.	The Defence of Acre spoils Napoleon's "destiny."
1799.	30 Aug.	Surrender of the Dutch fleet.
1800.	Feb. and Mar.	The *Généreux* and *Guillaume Tell*, the only French ships to escape from the Nile, hunted down and captured.
1800.	Sept.	Malta surrenders to the British fleet.
1800.	Nov.	Revival of the Armed Neutrality of the North.
1801.	2 April.	Battle of Copenhagen.
1802.	March.	Peace of Amiens concludes the Revolutionary War.
1803.	16 May.	England declares war upon Napoleon.
1803–5.		Cornwallis blockades Brest and Nelson Toulon.
1805.	11 Jan.	The Rochefort squadron slips through the blockade.
1805.	April.	Third Coalition against France.
1805.	10 April.	Villeneuve is joined by the Cadiz squadron and makes for the secret rendezvous.
1805.	14 May.	Villeneuve reaches the West Indies.
1805.	4 June.	Nelson reaches the West Indies.
1805.	22 July.	Battle of Ferrol (Calder *v.* Villeneuve).
1805.	15 Sept.	Nelson leaves England for the last time.
1805.	21 Oct.	Battle of Trafalgar.
1805.	4 Nov.	Battle of Cape Ortegal (Strachan *v.* Dumanoir).
1805.	Dec.	Nelson's body lies in state at the Painted Hall, Greenwich.
1806.	9 Jan.	Nelson buried in St. Paul's.
1806.	6 Feb.	Battle of San Domingo (Duckworth *v.* Leissegues).

1806.	Nov.	Beginnings of the "Continental System." Berlin Decrees.
1807.	19 Feb.–3 Mar.	Duckworth forces the Dardanelles.
1807.	July.	Treaty of Tilsit. Anti-British pact between France and Russia.
1807.		Orders in Council issued to neutralize the Continental System.
1807.	Aug.–Sept.	Bombardment of Copenhagen and surrender of the Danish fleet.
1807.		Seizure of Heligoland.
1807.	Dec.	Milan Decrees intensify the Continental System.
1808.		"R.N. College" supersedes the old "Academy" at Portsmouth and higher standard of education is inaugurated.
1809.	11–16 April.	Battle of the Basque Roads.
1809.	July–Sept.	Combined operations for the relief of Antwerp (Walcheren Expedition).
1810.		Capture of Mauritius.
1811.		Continental System at its height.
1812.	18 June.	United States declare war on Great Britain.
1812.	19 Aug.	H.M.S. *Guerrière* taken by U.S. frigate *Constitution*.
1812.	25 Oct.	H.M.S. *Macedonian* taken by U.S. frigate *United States*.
1812.	28 Dec.	H.M.S. *Java* taken by U.S. frigate *Constitution*.
1813.		Russia repudiates the Continental System.
1813.	1 June.	H.M.S. *Shannon* captures U.S. frigate *Chesapeake*.
1814.	14 Dec.	Peace of Ghent concludes Anglo-American War.
1815.	15 July.	Napoleon surrenders to H.M.S. *Bellerophon*.
1815.		Congress of Vienna closes the Napoleonic War.
1816.	27 Aug.	Bombardment of Algiers.
1819.		Occupation of Singapore.
1820.	Feb.	Dundonald captures Valdivia and liberates Chile.
1820.	Nov.	Dundonald cuts out the *Esmeralda* and liberates Peru.
1823.	Mar.–Nov.	Dundonald liberates Brazil.
1823.	Dec.	Monroe Doctrine enunciated.
1825.		Monthly advances of pay first made to the lower deck.
1827.	2 Oct.	Battle of Navarino.
1832.		Great Reform Bill.
1832.		Amalgamation of Board of Admiralty and Navy Board.
1833.		Abolition of commercial monopolies of East India Co.
1833.		Emancipation of slaves throughout the British Empire
1833.	5 July.	Napier defeats the Miguelite navy off St. Vincent.

1836.		Operations against Pirates in the Straits of Malacca.
1837.		Accession of Queen Victoria.
1837.		Shells, as substitute for Round Shot, made permissive in the British navy.
1838.		The " Fighting *Temeraire* " is towed to her last berth.
1839.		Foundation of Royal Mail Steam Packet Co. and other iron steamship lines.
1839.		Occupation of Aden.
1840.	3 Nov.	Bombardment of Acre.
1842.		Free Trade inaugurated.
1843.		Gentlemen Volunteers rechristened " Naval Cadets."
1845.		Tug-of-war between *Rattler* (screw) and *Alecto* (paddle-wheels).
1849.		Repeal of Navigation Acts.
1853.		Outbreak of Crimean War.
1853.	30 Nov.	Battle of Sinope. Turkish fleet annihilated by shell-fire.
1854.	5 Sept.	Napoleon III. constructs " Ironclads."
1854.	17 Oct.	Bombardment of Sebastopol.
1855.	17 Oct.	Bombardment of Kinburn.
1856.		Peace of Paris concludes the Crimean War.
1854–6.		Operations against Chinese Pirates.
1857.		Training-ship (*Illustrious*, afterwards *Britannia*) substituted for R.N. College, Portsmouth.
1857.		Uniform for Men adopted; cp. 1748.
1858.		Armstrong Gun (B.L., rifled cannon) tested by Admiralty.
1860.		Construction of *Warrior*, first iron battleship.
1860–89.		Transition period of Naval Architecture.
1861–5.		American Civil War.
1862.	9 Mar.	Battle of Hampton Roads.
1863.		H.M.S. *Britannia* transferred to Dartmouth.
1864.	19 June.	*Kearsage* v. *Alabama*.
1864.	5 Aug.	Battle of Mobile Bay.
1864.		Surrender of Ionian Isles to Greece.
1864.		Abolition of Red, White and Blue Squadrons.
1866.	20 July.	Austro-Italian War. Battle of Lissa.
1866.		Invention of Automobile Mine or Torpedo.
1867.		Navigating Lieutenants substituted for Masters.
1869.		Suez Canal completed.
1869.		Greenwich Hospital (for lack of inmates) closed by Act of Parliament.
1870.		Franco-Prussian War.
1870.	7 Sept.	H.M.S. *Captain* capsizes.

1873.		By Judicature Act, Admiralty Court amalgamated with Probate and Divorce.
1873.		Opening of Naval University at Greenwich.
1875.	Sept.	*Vanguard* rammed and sunk by *Iron Duke*.
1876.		Great Britain forgoes her claim to the Salute.
1877.		First British Torpedo Boat, *Lightning*.
1877.	April.	Outbreak of Russo-Turkish War.
1877.	May.	Admiral Hornby anchors outside the Dardanelles.
1878.	Feb.	Admiral Hornby forces the Dardanelles.
1878.	June.	Congress of Berlin meets.
1878.	July.	Admiral Hornby occupies Cyprus.
1878.		By Territorial Jurisdiction Act Great Britain forgoes her claim to possess the Narrow Seas.
1879.	March.	Admiral Hornby returns through the Dardanelles.
1879.	8 Oct.	War between Chile and Peru. Battle of Angamos.
1881.		Breech-loading principle accepted by Admiralty for big guns.
1881.		Hotchkiss and Nordenfelt quick-firers approved.
1885.		Britain builds a torpedo-boat "Catcher," *Rattlesnake*.
1887.		Quick-firing principle applied to Heavy Guns.
1888.		Accession of Wilhelm II.
1889.		Naval Defence Act closes the Transition Period of British Naval Architecture.
1890.		Publication of Mahan's *Influence of Sea Power upon History*.
1890.	1 July.	Cession of Heligoland to Germany.
1893.	22 June.	*Victoria* sunk by *Camperdown*.
1893.		First Torpedo Boat Destroyer, *Havock*.
1894–5.		Chino-Japanese War. Battle of the Yalu.
1898.		Spanish-American War.
1898.	1 May.	Battle of Manila Bay.
1898.	3 July.	Battle of Santiago.
1898.		Tirpitz appointed German Minister of Marine.
1898.		First German Navy Act.
1900.		Second German Navy Act.
1901.	22 Jan.	Death of Queen Victoria.
1901.	2 Nov.	First British Submarine launched.
1903.		Naval Cadets transferred from Training-ship to College.
1904.		Outbreak of Russo-Japanese War.
1905.	27 May	Battle of Tsu Shima.
1906–8.		Building of the *Dreadnought*.
1907.		First British Battle Cruiser launched.
1911–12.		Last voyage of Captain R. F. Scott.

1913.		"Light Cruiser" as a generic term makes its first appearance.
1913.		Admiralty appoints a committee to enquire into the tactics of Trafalgar.
1914.	4 Aug.	Beginning of the World War.
1914.	5–10 Aug.	Cruise of the *Goeben* and *Breslau*.
1914.	28 Aug.	Battle of Heligoland.
1914.	17 Oct.	*Undaunted* and flotilla destroy four German destroyers.
1914	27 Oct.	The dreadnought *Audacious* sunk by a German mine.
1914	1 Nov.	Battle of Coronel.
1914.	3 Nov.	Bombardment of Yarmouth.
1914.	9 Nov.	*Sydney* v. *Emden*.
1914.	8 Dec.	Battle of the Falkland Isles.
1914.	16 Dec.	Bombardment of Scarborough.
1915.	24 Jan.	Battle of the Dogger Bank.
1915.	Feb.	Submerged Blockade begins.
1915.	19 Feb.	Bombardment of Dardanelles defences.
1915.	25 April.	Combined attack upon Gallipoli.
1915.	7 May.	*Lusitania* sunk by German submarine.
1915.	6–11 July.	British monitors destroy the *Königsberg*.
1915.	8–18 Dec.	Evacuation of the Dardanelles.
1916.	31 May.	Battle of Jutland.
1917.	31 Jan.	Unrestricted U-Boat Warfare.
1917.	3 Feb.	Severance of relations between Germany and America.
1918.	23 April.	Attacks on Zeebrugge and Ostend.
1918.	29 Oct.	Naval Mutiny at Wilhelmshaven.
1918.	11 Nov.	Armistice.
1918.	21 Nov.	Surrender of the German fleet.
1919.	21 June.	Interned German ships scuttle themselves at Scapa.
1919.	28 June.	Treaty of Peace with Germany signed at Versailles.

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